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TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

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LEADING DHS NEWS

Judge Praises U.S. Efforts In Reuniting Migrant Families

By Tom Hals

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Feds Say 450 Children Reunited With Undocumented Immigrant Parents

By Alan Gomez

[USA Today](#), July 20, 2018

Federal officials said Friday that 450 children have now been reunited with their parents to comply with a federal judge's order that the Trump administration bring together undocumented immigrant families separated under its "zero tolerance" policy.

A majority of the nearly 2,600 immigrant children – who were detained at the U.S.-Mexico border with their parents for trying to illegally enter the country – still remain apart from their parents in facilities around the country.

The administration's controversial practice was designed to discourage illegal immigration by keeping immigrant parents apart from their children before they entered deportation proceedings. The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit against the policy in federal court in San Diego.

In response to the ACLU lawsuit, U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw ordered the Trump administration to end the practice of breaking up families, saying it potentially violates immigrants' due process rights. She then gave federal authorities 30 days to reunite nearly 2,600 children who had been separated from their parents. The deadline is July 26.

The first group – children under age 5 – were finished earlier this month when the government reunited 57 children with their parents.

The parents of 136 children waived their right to be reunited, according to a court filing by Justice Department attorneys.

During a court hearing in San Diego on Friday, Sabraw sounded pleased with the progress made so far by the government to meet his deadlines.

"It appears that this process is working and is on time and is on track," he said.

Department of Justice attorney August Flentje said the next few days will become complicated with cases where parents are more difficult to find, or their criminal background is still being investigated. But Flentje said the government is "hoping" to complete all required reunifications by Thursday's deadline.

"It's full speed ahead with reunifications and its full steam ahead," Flentje said.

Judge: 'Great Progress' Reuniting Families Split At Border

By Elliot Spagat

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

SAN DIEGO (AP) – A federal judge on Friday applauded Trump administration efforts to meet a deadline to reunite more than 2,500 children with their families after they were separated at the border.

Justice Department attorneys said in federal court in San Diego that 450 children 5 and older had been reunified, up from 364 a day earlier.

"I'm just very impressed with the effort that has been made," U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw said. "It really does appear that great progress has been made."

Hundreds of children are still awaiting reunions with their family.

In a court filing Thursday, the administration said about 1,600 parents were believed to be eligible for reunification and about 900 were not eligible or "not yet known to be eligible."

Nearly 700 of the ineligible parents are being vetted. Another 91 have been found to have a "prohibitive criminal record" or been deemed ineligible by U.S. Immigration and Customs and Enforcement.

Another 136 waived reunification, according to the Justice Department.

It appeared unlikely that all the children would be reunified by the July 26 deadline. More than 200 parents have been released into the U.S. and parents of an unknown number of children have been deported.

Friday's hearing was the sixth in three weeks and two more are scheduled next week, a sign of how closely the judge is monitoring the process.

His praise for the administration was a sharp turnaround from last week, when he said he was having second thoughts about whether the government was acting in good faith. The government submitted a revised reunification plan two days later that was well received by the judge.

In late June, Sabraw set deadlines of July 10 to reunify dozens of children under 5 with their families and July 26 for reunifications involving 2,551 children 5 and older.

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Judge Overseeing Family Reunifications Says He's 'Impressed' By Progress

By Kartikay Mehrotra

[Bloomberg News](#), July 20, 2018

The Trump administration says it's on the verge of reuniting almost all of the "eligible" families separated in recent months at the country's southern border as part of the government's 'zero tolerance' immigration policy.

The government said of 2,551 children held in detention, it has deemed 1,606 eligible to be reunited, after weeding out adults who weren't parents or who were otherwise unfit to take custody. As of this morning, 450 had been rejoined with their parents. Another 954 have been cleared for reunification ahead of a July 26 court-ordered deadline to complete the process, bringing the total to about 88 percent.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw said he's pleased with the status update offered by the government during a hearing Friday in San Diego federal court.

"I am very impressed with the effort that's being made. It does appear there's been great progress," he told attorneys for the U.S. Justice Department and the American Civil Liberties Union. "At least for those class members who are eligible and easy to reunify, this is very promising."

About 1,000 children have been deemed ineligible or not yet eligible to be reunited with their families: some have parents with criminal histories, others are still being investigated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, some adults have been ruled out as the parents and still others entered the country with adults who have since been deported.

The government previously returned 58 of 103 children under the age of 5 who'd been separated from their parents.

Parties will file another status update to the court on July 23. A hearing will follow the next day in San Diego.

The case is *Ms. L. et al v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement et al*, 18-cv-428, U.S. District Court, Southern District of California (San Diego).

Attorneys' Report Slams Conditions For Migrant Children At U.S. Detention Centers

By Kate Morrissey

[Los Angeles Times](#), July 20, 2018

Attorneys who recently visited Border Patrol stations, ports of entry and family detention centers filed a scathing report this week alleging that the federal government is not adequately caring for minors in its custody.

Children and their parents interviewed by the attorneys described cramped cells where there wasn't enough space or bedding to sleep, cold or frozen food and a lack of access to basic hygiene products like toothbrushes and soap.

The interviews were part of monitoring done through a court settlement called the Flores agreement that governs how long migrant children may be held in custody and under what conditions. After a San Diego

federal judge ordered the Trump administration last month to reunite families separated at the border, the government tried to renegotiate the settlement to be able to hold children longer than 20 days, as the Flores agreement stipulates. The judge in the Flores case rejected the government's argument.

In more than 1,000 pages of declarations with first-hand testimony from more than 200 parents and children held in custody in California, Texas and other states, the filing paints a vivid picture of the migrants' first moments in the U.S.

Alejandra, a 31-year-old woman from Mexico, said she asked for asylum with her four children at the San Ysidro port of entry in early July.

Her family was taken into custody, but didn't even receive a mat to sleep on, she told an attorney interviewing her, because there was no room.

"On the first night, my daughter wet herself while she was sleeping because there were so many people on the floor that you would have to walk over people to get to the toilet," Alejandra said. "She couldn't step over everyone."

She told the attorney that the toilets didn't have doors and there was no soap or paper towels.

She said she fled her home in Mexico because she was afraid her teenage daughter would be kidnapped at school.

The original complaint in the Flores lawsuit was filed in 1985, and the settlement has been in place since 1997. It allows attorneys to periodically inspect the conditions that children are held in. This is not the first time that attorneys representing the migrant children have said the government is not cooperating with the agreement.

Under the Obama administration, U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee of the Central District of California ruled in 2015 that the government had breached the agreement in a number of ways including allowing rooms that were cold and overcrowded as well as providing inadequate nutrition and hygiene.

"As a matter of policy, U.S. Customs and Border Protection does not comment on pending litigation," said Daniel Hetlage, spokesman for the agency, which is responsible for people in custody at ports of entry and Border Patrol stations. "However, lack of comment should not be construed as agreement or stipulation with any of the allegations. CBP takes all allegations seriously, and investigates all formal complaints."

A June filing from a customs official responsible for monitoring detention conditions for minors said that the agency was complying with the agreement's requirements. The official, Henry Moak Jr., said he

visited eight sites unannounced and interviewed 38 children.

"What I learned during the unannounced visits confirmed that agents and officers in the field execute their responsibilities professionally and in a manner consistent with the Agreement," Moak wrote.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) criticized the Trump administration's handling of arriving children based on the recent court document's findings. She said that she would be sending staff this week to inspect Customs and Border Protection facilities in El Centro.

"We have an obligation to treat children and families humanely," Feinstein said. "We can't look past the connection between the president's hateful words about immigrants 'infesting' America and 'sending them the hell back to their country' and the actions his administration is taking to hold them in deplorable conditions."

In one example described in the report, a minor named Floridalma was caught crossing the border at the end of June. She was held with her 3-year-old son in a Border Patrol facility in El Centro.

She described a small room crowded with four mothers and four children.

"We have two mattresses to share," she said. "We sleep with our heads on the mattresses and our bodies on the cement floor because there are only two mattresses for eight people."

Anet, a 15-year old girl held in El Centro said in her room, 18 people had three mattresses to split between them.

Brandon, a 14-year-old boy from Guatemala who came with his mother and two brothers to the San Ysidro port of entry in early July to ask for asylum, told the attorney who interviewed him about how cold the cell was — people held there often call it the "hielera," or icebox.

"I have to use my blanket all of the time," he told the attorney. "I would like another blanket, but I am not comfortable asking for one."

He said he hadn't been able to brush his teeth or wash himself since he arrived.

"There is no soap in my room and no towels," he said. "I had a toothbrush when I came here, but they took it away when I got to the facility."

Brandon said he fled with his family because someone shot five bullets into their house after his father quit working for the local sheriff, upsetting the local official.

A Salvadoran woman named Lidia who brought her 4-year-old son to the Texas border said that they received frozen sandwiches that they couldn't eat while they were in custody.

"My son was crying from hunger," she told the attorney interviewing her.

Attorneys recently visited family detention centers in Texas and Pennsylvania as well as ports of entry and Border Patrol holding facilities in California, New Mexico and Arizona.

Led by the Los Angeles-based Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, attorneys on Monday called the government's recent actions a "full-scale assault" on the settlement.

The filing calls for the court to appoint a special monitor to ensure that immigration officials comply with the agreement.

"Defendants' unsafe treatment of children continues unabated," the filing says. "Rather than signaling a willingness to end their breach of the Agreement, Defendants have doubled down on their breach seemingly for no other reason than that's what the President wants."

The filing alleges that the federal government uses "surges" of arrivals as an excuse not to follow the agreement. It calls on the government to provide a plan for what to do when migration spikes again.

"Unfortunately, recent chaotic events indicate no real plan may exist," the filing says.

Morrissey writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Women Ask 'What If It Were Me?' And Rush To Aid Separated Families

By Annie Correal

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

Julie Schwieter Collazo unrolled a giant sheet of paper at her kitchen table in Long Island City, Queens, on a recent morning. As her three children played nearby, she began going down a list of names written on it in purple marker.

"Hillary Estefany. Hillary Alejandra," she read, explaining they were 19-year-old twins whose brother was separated from them after they illegally crossed the Southwest border. Both were being held in Eloy, Ariz., on \$15,000 bonds. "Delmi. She's from Guatemala," she went on. "Separation case. \$30,000."

Just over three weeks ago, Ms. Schwieter Collazo launched a crowdfunding campaign on behalf of another woman detained in Eloy, Yeni González, a Guatemalan migrant whose children had been taken from her at the border as part of the Trump Administration's zero tolerance policy. Ms. Schwieter Collazo was spurred into action after she heard Ms. González's lawyer on the radio. While Ms. González was being held in Arizona on a \$7,500 bond, her three children were living in a foster home in New York.

"The subtext was if we could get her here, she could get her kids back," Ms. Schwietert Collazo said.

She set about getting Ms. González to New York. She asked a few mothers she had just met at a donation drive for separated children — and then the public — to help post Ms. González's \$7,500 bond.

Like the Texas-based nonprofit Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, or RAICES, which raised more than \$20 million after launching a Facebook fund-raiser to cover one detained parent's \$1,500 bond, the New York group soon exceeded its once modest goal. As of this week, Ms. Schwietert Collazo's group, which has gone from being called the Yeni González Support Team, to Immigrant Families Together, has raised more than \$300,000. They call themselves "a network of Americans committed to rapid response unification of families separated by the 'zero tolerance' policy."

Sara Farrington, a playwright, joined the group and "blitzed mom groups within 100 miles of here" on Facebook to raise money. "People ask me, 'Why this?' 'Why aren't you focusing on the midterms?' I think it comes back to empathy," she said. "To the gut punch of a mom separated from her 5-year-old. The reason that this has exploded, I truly think, is that moms have put themselves in that situation. It has hit a primitive motherly nerve. I think it all stems from, 'What if it were me?'"

Ms. Schwietert Collazo, a former social worker, is now a writer and editor. She launched the Yeni González crowdfunding campaign on June 25. Days later, she paid her bond, and Ms. González was released to her lawyer, José Orochena, in Eloy, and set out for New York.

Other women in the Eloy Detention Center learned of Mr. Orochena through Ms. González, who gave them her lawyer's contact information before she was released. Someone typed it up at a library in the detention center, printed 50 copies, and circulated them, Mr. Orochena said.

As the lawyer was flooded with calls, he passed along women's names to Ms. Schwietert Collazo and her group. And so began their round-the-clock work to release and reunite the mothers of Eloy with their children. For each woman they learned about, the organizers launched a crowdfunding campaign in her name.

To date, the group has raised funds — through a mix of crowdfunding and private donors — to cover the bonds of 12 women. It has also arranged for them to be driven by volunteers to wherever their children were sent, even if it was thousands of miles from Eloy. Most cannot fly because immigration authorities have held onto their photo identification.

The group has also provided the newly reunited families with housing and pro bono attorneys in the states where they have ended up, Ms. Schwietert Collazo said, creating, in the process, a broad network of helpers. "With the rabbis in Tennessee," she said into her phone at one point this week, "we should be set."

But now, the group's role may be changing. The federal government is hastily putting families back together in order to meet a court-ordered deadline to reunite all separated families by July 26. And the group in New York is getting calls for new kinds of help from all over the country.

This week, a lawyer made an urgent request for medical care for two girls, 2 and 6, who were on the road to Maryland after being reunited with a parent, but had been running high fevers. Another lawyer needed diapers and wipes.

Meghan Finn, the group member in charge of coordinating the women's travel after they are released from Eloy, said what they had been hearing was distressing.

After being transported over long distances to be reunited, often without much food or sleep, many families had been released in government offices, airports and bus stations, with their ankle monitors and a handful of paperwork from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and little more than the clothes in which they crossed the border.

"They're getting dropped off at Greyhound stations at random times," said Ms. Finn, co-artistic director of the Tank, a nonprofit theater in Midtown Manhattan.

"Listen, this is our job. This is our job because our government did something really heinous to these families, and it's not just about putting them on a bus."

Other than Ms. Schwietert Collazo's husband, Francisco Collazo — a refugee from Cuba who arrived on the Mariel boatlift — the group members are all women, most of them mothers. As their days have been consumed with helping separated families, their partners and parents have taken over child care duties, cooking meals, giving the children haircuts.

"My mom refers to the kitchen as the 'immigration office,'" said Ms. Finn, who lives in Kensington, Brooklyn, with her husband and their two young sons.

Ms. Schwietert Collazo remembers checking with her husband before she launched the first campaign. "I said, 'We both have to be all in on this. Because it's something that's going to take over our lives.' But I don't think either of us expected it would be to this extent."

Meeting the women they have bonded out has revealed the toll of separation and detention, Ms. Finn said. "They're losing their hair. Their hands are peeling.

They're malnourished. It takes them a while to eat properly."

So the group has continued raising funds to get more mothers out of Eloy, even as the immigration authorities there have kept increasing the bonds. Delmi's bond, \$30,000, is about four times as much as Ms. González's bond. "It's the highest one I've seen," Ms. Schwietert Collazo said.

On Tuesday, Ms. Finn sat with her laptop in a narrow dressing room at Tank on West 36th Street — that day's immigration office. As actors rehearsed to music onstage, she got a text message from Ms. Schwietert Collazo. Two more bonds had been posted, including one that would have expired the next day.

"Yes! Yes!" Ms. Finn said, slapping the counter. "Beautiful. We're going to get these ladies out!"

She picked up the phone and called a group member on the West Coast to start organizing the women's travel.

The next day, Delmi's bond was covered, too — all \$30,000 of it. The actress Kristen Bell closed the gap, with a \$4,207 donation.

Judge, Calm In Court, Takes Hard Line On Splitting Families

By Elliot Spagat

[Associated Press](#), July 22, 2018

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw appeared conflicted in early May on whether to stop families from being separated at the border. He challenged the Trump administration to explain how families were getting a fair hearing guaranteed by the Constitution, but also expressed reluctance to get too deeply involved with immigration enforcement.

"There are so many (enforcement) decisions that have to be made, and each one is individual," he said in his calm, almost monotone voice. "How can the court issue such a blanket, overarching order telling the attorney general, either release or detain (families) together?"

Sabraw showed how more than seven weeks later in a blistering opinion faulting the administration and its "zero tolerance" policy for a "crisis" of its own making. He went well beyond the American Civil Liberties Union's initial request to halt family separation — which President Donald Trump effectively did on his own amid a backlash — by imposing a deadline of this Thursday to reunify more than 2,500 children with their families.

Unyielding insistence on meeting his deadline, displayed in a string of hearings he ordered for updates, has made the San Diego jurist a central figure in a drama that has captivated international audiences with

emotional accounts of toddlers and teens being torn from their parents.

Circumstances changed dramatically after the ACLU sued the government in March on behalf of a Congolese woman and a Brazilian woman who were split from their children. Three days after the May hearing, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the zero tolerance policy on illegal entry was in full effect, leading to the separation of more than 2,300 children in five weeks.

Sabraw, writing in early June that the case could move forward, found the practice "arbitrarily tears at the sacred bond between parent and child." It was "brutal, offensive, and fails to comport with traditional notions of fair play and decency."

David Martin, professor emeritus at the University of Virginia School of Law, said, "It's probably not the first judge who seemed more deferential and then got much more active when he or she thought the government was not being responsive or had taken a particularly objectionable stance. Childhood separation clearly had that kind of resonance."

"The intrusion into the family is so severe, the judicial reaction has been just like much of the public's reaction: 'This is an extraordinary step, you shouldn't have done it, you better fix it as quickly as possible,'" said Martin, a Homeland Security Department deputy general counsel under President Barack Obama.

Sabraw, 60, was born in San Rafael, near San Francisco, and raised in the Sacramento area. His father was stationed in Japan during the Korean War, where he met his mother.

The judge has said prejudice against Japanese growing up made their housing search difficult.

"In light of that experience, I was raised with a great awareness of prejudice," he told the North County Times newspaper in 2003. "No doubt, there were times when I was growing up that I felt different, and hurtful things occurred because of my race."

While studying at University of the Pacific's McGeorge School of Law, he met his wife, Summer Stephan, who was elected San Diego County district attorney in June. He told the Federal Bar Association magazine in 2009 that his wife and three children, then teenagers, kept him "running from one activity to another, and grounded in all that is good and wonderful in life."

Republican President George W. Bush appointed Sabraw to the federal bench in 2003 after eight years as a state judge. By virtue of serving in San Diego, his caseload is heavy with immigration and other border-related crimes.

In 2010, he oversaw a settlement with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission over allegations that San Diego officials misled investors about city pension liabilities. In 2014, he favored Apple Inc. in a closely watched patent infringement case against the tech behemoth. In 2016, he sided with the state of California in refusing to block a law requiring school vaccinations.

Robert Carreido, a criminal defense attorney who estimates having 20 to 30 cases before the judge, was a little surprised how hard Sabraw came down on separating families because he hews pretty closely to the government's sentencing recommendations.

"He rarely will go above what we've negotiated (in plea agreements), but he doesn't usually go much lower than what the government recommends," Carreido said. "In my experience, I would consider him in the middle."

Sabraw's reputation for a calm, courteous demeanor and running an efficient calendar has been clear in his highest-profile case so far. He has kept hearings to about 90 minutes, telling attorneys he doesn't want to get too "in the weeds" on logistics of reunifying families.

"My general view is if the court has to raise its voice, or threaten sanction, then we've lost control," Sabraw told the Daily Journal, a Los Angeles legal publication, last year. "I never want to be in that position. Usually, almost always, court is almost like a place of worship."

His patience wore thin one Friday afternoon when the government submitted a plan to reunite children 5 and older that excluded DNA testing and other measures. The government said "truncated" vetting was needed to meet Sabraw's deadline, despite considerable risk to child safety.

The judge quickly summoned both sides to a conference call at 5:30 p.m. to say the plan misrepresented his instructions and was designed to pin blame on him if anything went wrong.

The government, which never showed serious consideration of an appeal, submitted a revised plan two days later that restored DNA testing if red flags arose. Jonathan White, a senior Health and Human Services Department official and the plan's architect, authoritatively answered questions in court the next day, prompting the judge to tell him he had "every confidence that you are the right person to do this."

The revised plan, he said, was a "great start to making a large number of reunifications happen very, very quickly."

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DHS NEWS

DHS Official: States Must Be 'Much More Precise' When Requesting Election Security Funding

By Olivia Beavers

[The Hill](#), July 20, 2018

The head of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) cyber and critical infrastructure protection efforts said Friday that states must be "much more precise" in their election security funding requests to Congress.

"If a state needs money, they need to say what they need it for and what they need – and that is going to help inform and drive the conversation on the Hill," Christopher Krebs, the undersecretary of the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD), said at The Washington Post's Cyber 202 Live event.

"Rather than just say, 'We need money, give us money,' it's, 'We need X amount of money to address X threat and find out X amount of risk,'" said Krebs, whose agency is tasked with supporting and protecting state election systems.

His remarks come a day after House Republicans voted down a Democratic-led effort to include additional election security funding in a government spending bill.

Democrats accused their GOP colleagues of failing to take the necessary steps to secure election systems from future Russian meddling.

The election security funding fight comes amid rising fears that Russian may seek to carry out another influence campaign in the U.S.

President Trump created a firestorm earlier this week at the Helsinki summit when he cast doubt on the U.S. intelligence community's findings that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. While standing alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin, he appeared to accept Putin's denials of any Russian meddling.

The summit was held three days after special counsel Robert Mueller indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers for their alleged role in hacking the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Krebs, when pressed, said Trump has condemned Russia for meddling in the 2016 election.

"I take the president at his word," he added.

Election-related systems in at least 21 states were targeted ahead of the 2016 elections, a DHS cybersecurity official told Congress last year.

More recently, an executive at Microsoft also disclosed that the company had identified and helped thwart hacking attempts on three congressional candidates earlier this year, marking the first publicly

known hacking efforts targeting candidates in the 2018 midterm elections.

"Earlier this year, we did discover that a fake Microsoft domain had been established as the landing page for phishing attacks," Tom Burt, Microsoft's vice president for security and trust, said Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum.

Washington Takes Notice: Dannels Offered Seat On Homeland Security Advisory Council

By Emily Ellis

[Douglas \(AZ\) Dispatch](#), July 21, 2018

The Department of Homeland Security is getting a new voice, and it's coming from Cochise County.

Sheriff Mark Dannels has been offered an appointed seat on the Department of Homeland Security Advisory Council in Washington, D.C., following recognition of the successful border-security initiatives carried out by the Cochise County Sheriff's Office in partnership with other local agencies.

Dannels is traveling to the capital on Sunday, and is scheduled to meet with DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and President Donald Trump to discuss the appointment the following day.

It was during a tour of the Arizona border in June that Nielsen first brought up the idea of bringing Dannels on to the council after meeting with him in Douglas, said Carol Capas, spokeswoman for the sheriff's office.

"After her visit, it was determined that he could be a voice in the community and a part of that advisory council," said Capas. "It's typically made up of members of the DHS and other federal agencies."

High-ranking military officers and executives currently fill the majority of the seats at the council, which made national headlines this week after four members resigned over the current administration's hard-line immigration policies, reported the Washington Post.

Dannels said enforcing immigration policy was the responsibility of federal law enforcement, not local.

"I believe in staying in our lanes when it comes to immigration policy," he said.

The Herald/Review reached out to DHS for a comment on the appointment, and was told the agency's procedure for media requests takes days to process. However, Dannels is the first local sheriff ever to have been offered a seat on the council, according to a CCSO media advisory.

"What I believe it does is bring this community voice into a bureaucracy," said Dannels. "I think that voice gets lost, and I'm going to bring that voice to these

folks who sometimes forget what the community is all about."

Cochise County's innovative border security initiatives, many of which have gained national recognition, were what put the sheriff's office on the White House's radar. Among them are the Borders to Backyards program, in which sheriffs from throughout the U.S. traveled to the county to get an overview of the drug smuggling issue and to tour the border, along with implementing a ranch patrol program.

Other programs include a project to install cameras along known smuggling routes in Cochise County, which is managed by the Southeastern Arizona Border Region Enforcement Team, a group of DPS border strike force members and members of the Cochise County Sheriff's Office.

Out of the 70 percent apprehension rate based on the camera system, there is a 100 percent conviction rate for criminal drug smuggling in the county, said Capas.

Another nationally recognized initiative was Operation Immediate Consequences, an effort by the county attorney and the sheriff's office to try juvenile drug smugglers as adults. The program drastically reduced the number of youth smugglers in Cochise County, Capas said.

"This border plan in Cochise County is a community-based border plan," said Dannels. "If it's working, let's take it beyond that. This credit goes to all layers of government."

"I couldn't do it without border patrol, our governor, and the community in this county."

Cochise County rancher John Ladd, whose property sits along the U.S.-Mexico border, said he was glad to hear that DHS had offered Dannels the appointment.

"I think that's really smart, to have Homeland Security finally figure out that a border sheriff understands what needs to happen," said Ladd, who also noted that he would like to see the federal government give local law enforcement more funds for border security. "Our sheriffs have done a whole lot in the county — and the prosecutors and the attorney — to step up and try to enforce the law."

Dannels said he looks forward to representing the interests of local communities and law enforcement as an adviser, by "having a voice at the table saying that you have to take care of our local governments that are working to make your communities safer."

While Dannels hasn't been officially appointed to the council yet, he has been endorsed by the National Sheriffs Association, the secretary of homeland security, and other sheriffs' coalitions.

He expects to receive a confirmation next week.

"I love serving Cochise County, and the best part of going to Washington, D.C. is coming back to where I live," said Dannels. "Community always comes first to me."

BORDER SECURITY

Six Men Land In The Florida Keys From Cuba

By David Goodhue

[Miami Herald](#), July 20, 2018

Monroe County Sheriff's Office deputies found six Cuban men on shore near Whale Harbor in the Upper Florida Keys early Friday morning..

The men, who reported no medical issues, arrived in Islamorada between 4:15 am. and 4:30 a.m., Adam Linhardt, spokesman for the Sheriff's Office, said.

Adam Hoffner, U.S. Border Patrol agent in charge in Marathon, said the men told agents they left Matanzas, Cuba about four days earlier. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission released a photo later Friday morning of the blue, wooden vessel on which the men arrived.

Since the Obama administration, in one of its last foreign policy decisions, ended "wet-foot, dry-foot," which allowed Cubans reaching U.S. soil by sea to stay in the country, migration from the island nation 90 miles south of Key West slowed dramatically. SIGN UP

The men found Friday will likely be processed by the U.S. Border Patrol and sent back to Cuba by the Coast Guard. In the days of wet-foot, dry-foot, they would be able to apply for permanent U.S. residency a year after arrival.

Before the announcement to end the policy, South Florida was seeing multiple landings every week, sometimes daily.

Cubans correctly anticipated the policy, which mandated those caught en route were sent back, would end after the Obama administration began strengthening diplomatic relations with the communist Castro regime, ending their automatic refugee status.

The United States Coast Guard tracks migration numbers by fiscal years beginning Oct. 1. In fiscal year 2017, Cuban migration accounted for 44 percent of total migrants stopped at sea from countries including the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Haiti and others. That is a 27-percent decrease from fiscal year 2016, according to the Coast Guard's 2017 Annual Performance Report.

The last landing in the Keys was June 30 near Key West, Hoffner said. And, earlier this month, an off-duty Sheriff's Office deputy boating with his friends rescued

four men from Cuba who were clinging to a raft about 40 miles offshore in the Lower Keys.

"We continuously warn migrants of the dangers associated with traveling by sea while attempting to enter the United States illegally," Hoffner said in an emailed statement. "During this time of year, migrants may be exposed to extreme tropical temperatures and will often suffer from the effects of dehydration."

Follow David Goodhue on Twitter
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AVIATION SECURITY

Woman Who Clashed With TSA Likely To Appeal Case That Shields Screeners

By Fredrick Kunkle

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

It's been nearly 12 years since Nadine Pellegrino clashed with Transportation Security Administration officers at an airport checkpoint in Philadelphia, and she's still furious about what happened.

She might even be angrier, now that her case has led to a federal appeals court decision saying TSA screeners cannot be sued for civil damages over alleged abuses.

"I'm outraged, as well as many other people who hear the real facts of what happened," Pellegrino, 69, of Boca Raton, Fla., said in an interview. "I was illegally arrested. . . . I refer to what happened to me as a cesspool of corruption at the TSA. And nothing is done about it."

Pellegrino is able to recite from memory her version of what happened before local police at Philadelphia International Airport led her away in handcuffs on July 29, 2006, and what has happened during the legal fight since. She even acted as her own attorney in her lawsuit afterward, including questioning a witness. She is not ready to let the matter drop.

Pellegrino and her husband, Harry Waldman, are reviewing their options and thinking of taking the appeal higher, perhaps to the Supreme Court.

"I would say it's likely," Waldman, 76, said Monday.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit filed an opinion July 11 saying that TSA screeners cannot be sued for alleged abuses because they enjoy sovereign immunity as government employees. The decision means that while a TSA agent could face criminal charges for intentional acts that harm others, the government and the officers could not be sued for such behavior.

The precedent-setting case turned on two issues: whether the sort of searches conducted by TSA agents

trigger Fourth Amendment protections and whether TSA screeners should be classified as law enforcement officials.

Pellegrino argued that the narrow legal questions decided by the appeals court overlook governmental abuses she describes as “Kafkaesque.” The couple, who filed the lawsuit together, said TSA officers and their supervisors treated her roughly at the checkpoint, fabricated assault charges against her, and lost or destroyed surveillance video of the event — even though the couple had retained an attorney days after her arrest and requested that the agency preserve any such videos.

The couple also said the TSA benefited by claiming one thing in the lower courts — namely that the TSA screeners were law enforcement officers, thereby triggering felony assault charges against Pellegrino — but then saying the opposite in federal court.

Meanwhile, the controversy has taken its toll, Pellegrino said. She has spent 18 hours in a city lockup, nearly two years battling criminal charges, which were dismissed, and almost nine years in federal court hoping to hold the government accountable.

“It destroyed me professionally,” said Pellegrino, who taught communications at Pennsylvania State University and the College of New Jersey before becoming a consultant for clients such as Novartis and Holiday Inn.

The federal lawsuit — which was filed in November 2009 on a pro se basis, meaning Pellegrino and Waldman were representing themselves without an attorney — describes the checkpoint encounter as a “nightmare.” Their suit offers a highly detailed, often combative account routinely describing TSA officers as “false witnesses,” accusing them of displaying “unwarranted venomous nonverbal animosity” during the screening, and characterizing their checkpoint as “remarkably mismanaged.” In several instances, Pellegrino objects to statements of fact adopted by court opinions as “TSA-washed” versions of the truth.

The saga began July 29, 2006, as the Florida couple headed home after a visit to their previous residence in the Philadelphia area. Both — who have logged hundreds of thousands of air miles as business consultants in the communications field — were flying platinum status with US Airways.

“This wasn’t our first experience going through a checkpoint,” Waldman said. “We’ve probably been through most airports in the U.S. — and never, ever had a problem, even in the roughest countries.”

At least an hour before Flight 955 to Fort Lauderdale was scheduled to depart at 8:30 p.m., they reported to the TSA checkpoint in Concourse B of the

Philadelphia International Airport to begin screening, court papers say.

After Pellegrino, with three pieces of luggage, passed through a metal detector, a male TSA officer told her she would have to step aside for additional screening. But his “rude” demeanor and his violent handling of her bags prompted her to ask for a private search, her complaint says.

When a female TSA officer — identified in court papers as Nuyriah Abdul-Malik — appeared a few minutes later to conduct the private search, Pellegrino asked the TSA agent to first replace her gloves, as they appeared soiled. That request caused tensions to increase further, the U.S. District Court’s opinion says. Abdul-Malik is quoted in court papers as saying that Pellegrino seemed like “one of those passengers, irate passengers . . . who would give me a hard time.”

Pellegrino, accompanied by Abdul-Malik and two additional female TSA officers, was led to a tiny room beside the checkpoint for the private pat-down and search. This, too, was unnecessarily rough and intrusive, Pellegrino said.

Besides being frisked and swabbed for possible explosives, Pellegrino said, Abdul-Malik looked at her cellphone data, delved into library and credit cards, examined private papers, smelled her cosmetics and hand sanitizer, and examined her lipstick. Lids were left open on some of the items, which spilled into the rest of her luggage. She also said that Abdul-Malik manhandled her bags, at one point breaking a zipper, breaking her eyeglasses and damaging her jewelry.

“What is going on here — both of you are behaving like b—es,” the U.S. District Court opinion quotes Pellegrino as saying.

Pellegrino threatened to report the TSA agents to a superior. The TSA agents threatened to call the police.

But then the search wound down, and Pellegrino was told she could repack her things and go — and the situation deteriorated further.

When she went to remove her luggage, the TSA agents accused her of deliberately shoving a bag into one of the TSA screeners near the door — a charge Pellegrino denies. While collecting another bag from under the table, she allegedly hit another TSA officer’s leg — which Pellegrino also denies. In her frustration, Pellegrino tossed a pair of shoes from the small room, making sure no one was in the vicinity, because she said she wanted to pack those in public.

This time, police were summoned. Pellegrino was led away in handcuffs and spent about 18 hours in a city lockup before she was released.

Philadelphia authorities booked Pellegrino on 10 charges for allegedly assaulting the two TSA agents.

These included felony aggravated assault, simple assault, reckless endangerment, making terroristic threats and “possession of instruments of a crime” — i.e., the luggage. The TSA threatened to file a civil claim against Pellegrino for violating security procedures.

Nearly two years after her arrest, however, Pellegrino was acquitted. Owing to the missing video, the presiding judge barred the TSA agents from testifying about some of the events that day, and Abdul-Malik did not appear, court papers say.

Then Pellegrino sought redress from the TSA. She filed a claim against the agency in 2008, which was denied, and then filed the lawsuit, alleging false arrest, malicious prosecution and other charges. A U.S. District Court judge allowed her claim for about \$5,000 in property damage to proceed but otherwise found that the TSA and its officers could not be held liable. The couple appealed, and in February 2017, the appellate court appointed attorney Paul M. Thompson to assist in the case by filing an amicus brief on their behalf.

Last week, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit held that TSA screeners enjoy sovereign immunity because, despite their badges and titles as “officers,” they do not qualify as “investigative or law enforcement officers” who could be held legally responsible for abuses under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

The court, which sits in Philadelphia, also revisited the question of when a search should trigger Fourth Amendment protections. The court found TSA searches are “administrative” in nature, making TSA screeners more like federal meat inspectors than police officers.

The U.S. attorney whose office handled the case and other federal officials praised the ruling.

“We are pleased with the decision by the Court of Appeals,” said U.S. Attorney William M. McSwain in a statement. “Through the Federal Tort Claims Act, Congress sought carefully to balance the federal government’s sovereign immunity and duty to protect taxpayer dollars against the need to provide a remedy for plaintiffs in certain cases. The Court rightly concluded that Congress did not provide for suits against the government for the acts of federal employees, including Transportation Security Administration Officers, who are not empowered by law with traditional law enforcement responsibilities.”

The TSA also welcomed the decision and sought to reassure the public that their officers will be held accountable for wrongdoing.

“The Pellegrino decision does not change the well-established law that the United States can be sued for the negligent acts of its employees, but cannot be sued for the intentional acts of its employees, unless the

employee is a law enforcement officer,” TSA spokeswoman Lisa Farbstein said in an email, adding that passengers can still seek compensation for checkpoint injuries. “TSA takes allegations of misconduct by its employees very seriously. Such complaints are swiftly reviewed. If the allegations are substantiated, the responsible employees are subject to discipline up to and including removal.”

But Pellegrino and Waldman said they believe the decision has given TSA checkpoint screeners free rein to treat passengers badly, and even the appeals court acknowledged that passengers have very limited legal options in the face of outrageous TSA misconduct.

“It’s hard enough now if you want to go against the federal government for anything, they make it extraordinarily difficult and expensive,” Waldman said. “Now they’ve made it impossible.”

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Immigrant Parents Have Trouble Reaching Separated Children

By Morgan Lee, Claudia Torrens

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

NEW YORK (AP) — An immigrant father from Guatemala dotes over his despondent teenage daughter during a weekly 10-minute phone call, while other parents wait weeks for the phone to ring.

A mother in Louisiana has phone video chats with her detained 5-year-old son in Texas, while a Honduran asylum-seeker had actual face time with his little girl, visiting her in person. He made sure to bring along a McDonald’s hamburger to share.

Immigrant parents who were separated from their children under President Donald Trump’s “zero tolerance” policy for illegal border crossings are struggling to communicate by any means possible in the age of instant, international social media with sons and daughters kept in government-contracted facilities around the country. For most parents, phone calls have been the only connection to their children as the separations dragged on for weeks.

Honduran immigrant Carla Garcia waits each day in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on calls for unscheduled telephone and video conversations with her son at a holding facility in Texas — calls she cannot return. She and 5-year-old Jonathan were separated after crossing the border together in late May. Garcia was released from detention a month later with an ankle monitor and moved in with relatives.

"I was happy to be able to see him, and then it was even more difficult to see him from far away," she said. "He just looked at me, worried."

Several parents say it has been difficult or impossible to maintain their composure as children break down in tears, complain of loneliness, ask for clues about when they might be released or think they were abandoned.

"She was crying, inconsolably," said Guatemalan immigrant Josue Aguilar about his 16-year-old daughter, who he believes is at a holding facility somewhere in Texas. "She said, 'I don't want to be here anymore.' I could only tell her to try and have a little patience."

Aguilar said he and his daughter have just enough time to console one another before the calls end. They are only allotted 10 minutes.

"They give her one call a week. Ten minutes. It's just not enough time," said Aguilar, who moved in with relatives in Atlanta after his release from detention to await asylum proceedings.

In other cases, parents and children are finding creative ways to cope. A 15-year-old boy tells his 5-year-old brother that their separated mom was working and that's the reason they're apart, says the lawyer for the mother.

Adrian Velasquez persuaded a social worker to text him three pictures of his 8-year-old son. The images show Jason doing math homework inside a government facility in Texas and standing alongside smiling children of his age.

Velasquez said his son initially threatened to break free and escape his location after they separated by authorities at the Texas border. A month later, he believes the boy has adapted and will eventually be freed without signs of emotional trauma.

"He is a really active kid," Velasquez said. "It's not going to affect him."

The Justice Department last week filed a plan to reunify more than 2,500 children age 5 and older by a court-imposed deadline of July 26. It was unclear how many of those families remain separated as the number of releases accelerated this week in Texas.

In rare instances, immigrant parents have been allowed to visit face-to-face with their children under supervision, as authorities take weeks to complete background checks and custody paperwork.

Asylum seeker and mother Digna Perez of El Salvador said the arrangement was stifling and upsetting.

"They didn't feel free to talk to me that way – not as if I were alone with them" said Perez of her 9-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter. She was separated from them in late May as they crossed from Mexico into El

Paso, Texas. "They're always going to have this memory when they're older. They're not going to forget this easily, the separation."

Mario Romero of Honduras recalled an hour-long visit with his 10-year-old daughter, Fabiola, at the office of a child-detention contractor in El Paso, Texas – a few blocks from the border with Mexico.

He brought along a burger to share and told his daughter that he owed her another present – for a birthday she spent in detention.

"I could see her, I could hug her," Romero said. "Thank God I was given the opportunity to kiss her."

Perez and Romero were reunited with their children on Monday.

Released from an immigrant detention center on June 24, Manuel Marcelino Tzah played detective to connect with his 11-year-old daughter. He called home to Guatemala and found his daughter had left a working phone number with her mother.

"I started to cry when I heard her voice" after two months, he said. "She also cried. I told her, 'Don't worry, we will be together soon.'"

They were reunited at an airport in New York City on Tuesday.

Parents who remain in detention confront even greater difficulties in communicating with separated immigrant children.

Attorney Jose Xavier Orochena said jailed immigrant parents he has represented were at the mercy of social workers who coordinate outgoing calls from children at the Cayuga Center in New York.

"One has to wait for Cayuga to call the mother," he said. "From the detention center, no one can call the social worker."

Lee reported from Santa Fe, New Mexico

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As Migrant Families Reunite, Texas Border Cities Scramble To Help

By Manny Fernandez And Mitchell Ferman

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

SAN JUAN, Tex. — The delivery trucks keep pulling up to one of the largest churches on the South Texas border. They have unloaded thousands of diapers in recent days — tall stacks of diaper boxes sit on pallets outside an auditorium, wrapped tightly in plastic. On Tuesday, Dairy Queen even showed up, delivering donated ice-cream bars.

Four hundred of them.

All of it — the ice cream, diapers, disposable plates, shampoo, bottles of water, electrolyte children's drinks — has arrived at the church in the border town of San Juan to help the Rio Grande Valley's newest and neediest temporary residents: the migrant families who were separated by immigration authorities after crossing the border and then reunited and released.

For days now, San Juan, McAllen and other cities in the Rio Grande Valley have been a way station for the reunified families. Volunteers, city officials, local businesses and members of Catholic organizations have scrambled to feed, assist and provide transportation and overnight housing for hundreds of the reunited families.

The process has been a relatively smooth one, because of a loose network of volunteers and officials who have been helping and housing undocumented immigrants in the Valley for years. But as hundreds of reunited families have been released in just a matter of days, that network has struggled to respond to an unanticipated logistical emergency.

Federal officials faced with a federal court deadline to reunite migrant children with their parents have in many cases left the families, their lawyers and the volunteers to sort out what happens after their release — where they would sleep, eat and stay cool in the South Texas heat while they wait for hours or even a day to board their bus or plane.

Some of the newly released families are sleeping and resting on the floor at the San Juan church campus, lying on thick blue mats, until their onward travel plans can be arranged.

Officials with the federal Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security said that they were “working tirelessly” to manage the logistics of the reunifications, which under the court's order must be completed by July 26.

“The safety and well-being of children remains our top priority as we work to comply with the court's order as expeditiously as possible,” the officials said in a statement. One of the agencies involved, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, had tapped additional resources “to facilitate more efficient reunification of family units going forward.”

With less than a week left before the deadline, just 364 of the 2,551 separated children, or less than 15 percent, have been reunited with their families, according to a status report filed on Thursday.

For parents who have in many cases spent weeks in detention, struggling to learn the whereabouts of their children, their ordeal does not end once they are reunited. Lives remain in upheaval: They are led to other shelters, obtain donated clothes, line up for food and rely on others to arrange their bus and air travel as they head

for the cities around the country where their relatives live.

Top officials in the Valley have pitched in. The ice-cream delivery was coordinated in part by the mayor of McAllen, Jim Darling. A local Dairy Queen owner read about separated families, called Mr. Darling and offered to donate Dilly Bars.

The mayor contacted Sister Norma Pimentel, the Catholic nun known for her work helping undocumented adults and children. Sister Pimentel — the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley — asked for 400 bars, and Dairy Queen made the delivery Tuesday at the church, a tourist attraction called the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle.

“It's unfortunate that we have had to deal with it for so long, but we're proud to do it,” Mr. Darling said of the city's yearslong assistance in helping the immigrants who are periodically released by federal authorities in McAllen.

San Juan and McAllen have become hubs for the newly reunified families largely because of its location near the Port Isabel detention center, an ICE facility where many of the families in South Texas have been reunited. After children and parents are brought back together, the families are driven to the Basilica in San Juan. From there, volunteers and others take some of them to the airport in McAllen.

Laura Torres, 47, a Desert Storm Army veteran who lives in McAllen, served as a volunteer airport driver for the families. Her neighbor asked her to help, and so on Tuesday, she picked up four mothers and their four children at the Basilica, drove them to the airport and helped make sure they got on their flights to various cities where they will join their relatives.

Ms. Torres said most of the mothers she drove had not previously seen their children in more than a month. One mother was from Guatemala and was headed to Chicago to join her husband. Others were from El Salvador and Honduras, and they were catching flights to Miami, Maryland and Minnesota.

“It was important to me because they are human beings and because I felt bad when I first saw the pictures of the children in the cages,” Ms. Torres said.

On Thursday morning, the scene at the Basilica illustrated the needs, and the numbers. The church provides a spacious, tree-shaded resting spot off Expressway 83. The immigrants lingered on the grounds, sitting on the grass near winding sidewalks as their children ran around. Next to a gift shop, beyond a gazebo wrapped with flowers, people mingled outdoors in an area covered by canopies. Volunteers carried boxes between the buildings. Hundreds of people — as

many as 300 or 400, those involved said — this week were calling it a temporary home.

Not all of the families were those who had been separated as part of the Trump administration's "zero-tolerance" policy on border enforcement. Some had been apprehended together at the border, detained and released with ankle monitors. One of those was a widow and mother of four from Honduras. She was lying on the grass, her baby on top of her, as her son climbed a tree. The woman, who asked that her name not be used because of her immigration status, managed a smile.

"We're so happy," she said. Then she paused. "It's not that we're happy. It's that we're content."

Caitlin Dickerson contributed reporting from New York.

Trump Ramps Up Scrutiny Of Legal Immigrants

By Lydia Wheeler

[The Hill](#), July 22, 2018

The Trump administration is stepping up efforts to curb legal immigration, taking a series of actions in recent weeks that could lead to deportation for people already granted citizenship.

The director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) — an office established in 2003 to process immigrant applications for visas, work permits, green cards and citizenship — told *The Associated Press* recently that the agency is hiring dozens of lawyers and immigration officers to review cases of immigrants who are suspected of having lied to officials during the naturalization process.

The office made public on July 5 a memo announcing its plan to start issuing notices to appear for a wider range of cases. Those notices, which require an immigrant to appear before an immigration judge on a certain date, can be the first step in deportation proceedings.

Experts say that policy change, coupled with what came next, could vastly expand the number of individuals being referred for removal.

The agency said last week that starting Sept. 11 its adjudicators will have the ability to outright deny applications that are missing information. That's a departure from an Obama-era policy of sending requests for more evidence or issuing a warning of their intent to deny the application.

"The memos are really, layer by layer, going after people who are in line doing the right things," Anastasia Tonello, president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, said.

The administrative changes highlight how Trump officials, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions and White House adviser Stephen Miller, aren't just seeking to curtail illegal immigration — they're also taking steps against naturalized citizens in an effort to reduce the number of foreign-born residents in the U.S.

USCIS says the policy changes are an effort to ensure the nation's immigration laws are faithfully executed to keep communities safe and secure.

Michael Bars, an agency spokesman, said in a statement to *The Hill* that immigrants can always file an appeal when a benefit is denied.

But immigration experts say the changes — along with the agency's new mission statement emphasizing the security of U.S. citizens — mark a noticeable shift in an agency that was previously focused on customer service.

"There's a reason we set up our benefits agency separate from our enforcement agency, and it seems like a bunch of changes have been put in place to make USCIS more of an enforcement agency," said Sarah Pierce, a policy analyst with Migration Policy Institute's U.S. Immigration Policy Program. "It's problematic and very concerning."

USCIS called the allegation that it is transitioning to an enforcement agency false and inaccurate.

"The truth is that many open borders advocates believe the U.S. should turn a blind eye to cases of illegal immigration, fraud, human trafficking, gang activity and drug proliferation at the expense of public safety and the integrity of our laws," Bars said.

"Each year, immigration benefits including the great privilege of citizenship are attainable for many legitimate individuals each seeking greater opportunity, prosperity, and security as newly entrusted members of society," he said, adding that USCIS is committed to adjudicating all petitions and applications fairly, efficiently and effectively on a case-by-case basis.

The additional lawyers and immigration officials announced in June by USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna are for a new office that the agency says will serve as a centralized location to review and refer appropriate cases for denaturalization to the Department of Justice.

The cases involve individuals who had been ordered to be removed from the country and intentionally used multiple identities to defraud the government to obtain citizenship, USCIS said.

The new office is the byproduct of an investigation completed in 2016 by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) discovered in 2011 that it was missing fingerprint records of immigrants who

were fugitives or convicted criminals, as well as those who had deportation orders.

The investigation found that USCIS has granted U.S. citizenship to 858 immigrants who had been ordered deported or removed under another name.

More than 2,500 naturalization cases have been determined to require an in-depth review for possible denaturalization, of which almost 100 have been referred to the Department of Justice for denaturalization, according to USCIS.

So far, six individuals have been denaturalized, meaning ICE will decide whether to pursue deportation proceedings.

With so few denaturalizations for fraud, policy experts say the new office isn't worth the investment.

Ruth Wasem, a clinical professor of public policy at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, said most people haven't done anything wrong.

"It's hard not to think it's pretty hateful to be assuming people who are trying to go through the legal process are somehow sinister," she said.

Rep. McCaul: 'Nearly Every Democrat Voted For My Bill' To Reauthorize ICE A Year Ago

By Mike Brest

[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

Representative Michael McCaul pointed out Saturday morning that nearly every Democrat voted for his bill to reauthorize ICE a year ago despite their new energy to abolish the agency.

"The irony, Neil, is that a year ago today, nearly every Democrat voted for my bill to fully authorize ICE into law for the first time ever, including Nancy Pelosi, including the Democrat who introduced the bill to abolish ICE," McCaul stated on "Cavuto Live" Saturday morning.

"They brought this fight on when they wanted to abolish ICE, so we wanted to call their bluff and say 'okay, great.' Then why don't you vote for your bill," he continued about the recent movement to disband ICE. "Then they backed off and said we're going to vote against our bill to abolish ICE and that's precisely the time we put a bill in favor of supporting our men and women and ICE who protect Americans every day from drug traffickers."

House lawmakers voted for a resolution that supports ICE officials and explicitly condemns Democrats' calls to abolish the agency earlier this week. A majority of the Democrats voted "present," which is not an explicit response either way.

McCaul was referencing the DHS Authorization Act of 2017, which passed in the house a year ago on July 20, by a vote of 386-41. 32 Democrats and 9 Republicans voted against it.

Of the three Democrats who recently sponsored a bill that would effectively abolish ICE, Rep. Mark Pocan voted to support the agency a year ago.

Ex-ICE Director Responds To Michelle Wolf Video Comparing Agency To ISIS

By John Bowden

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

Former U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director Thomas Homan on Saturday responded to Netflix star Michelle Wolf after the comedian compared the agency to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in a parody video.

Homan told Fox News host Neil Cavuto that Wolf's video inaccurately portrayed ICE, citing law enforcement statistics from the agency's past year of operations.

"We've saved several thousands of children from drug traffickers," Homan said. "We have arrested over 2,000 child predators who trafficked in children for sexual exploitation."

"What ICE officers have done in this past year is arrest more than 100,000 criminals walking the streets of our country," he continued. "We've seized 981,000 pounds of narcotics in the neighborhoods of this country. What ICE is doing is protecting this country and keeping us safe."

Former ICE Director Thomas Homan responds to comedian Michelle Wolf's "ICE is" video [pic.twitter.com/Pp9CG0pECT](#)— Neil Cavuto (@TeamCavuto) July 21, 2018

Homan's remarks come after Wolf's show "The Break" tweeted a parody video in which Wolf, dressed as Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, explains that "no organization is better than ICE is," while guns are fired in the air and she lists positions similar to those held by the extremist group.

"It's popular nowadays to say ICE is bad, but there is no better representation of American values right now than what ICE is," Wolf adds in the video.

Wow, ICE is ... really desperate for recruits. #abolishICE [pic.twitter.com/wOxn4pQX0E](#)— The Break with Michelle Wolf (@thebreaknetflix) July 20, 2018

Some Democrats have joined calls from left-leaning activists to abolish ICE, the federal government's primary agency for enforcing immigration policy.

Calls to abolish the agency, which was established during the Bush administration, have yet to pick up traction among the Democratic Party's leadership, but

have become a top target of President Trump and the White House as the administration seeks to paint Democrats as weak on the issue of illegal immigration.

Wolf previously hosted the White House correspondents' dinner earlier this year, causing controversy when some supporters of the president accused Wolf of attacking press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders's appearance.

Legal Challenges Leave Sanctuary Immigration Policies In Limbo

Cities and states fight Trump administration crackdown, with no clear winner

By Alexa Corse

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

We Can't Outsource America's Asylum System

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

The crisis involving migrants fleeing violence in Central America, seeking sanctuary in the United States and overwhelming American immigration courts is real. The Obama administration was flummoxed by it when the numbers of women and unaccompanied children crossing the border spiked in 2014. The Trump administration, predisposed against immigrants of almost any kind, has responded to it by means of outright cruelty, splitting up families to deter migration, shattering the lives of children and parents in the process.

That outrage doesn't diminish the urgency of dealing with the waves of Central Americans flooding northward. What would constitute a reasonable, humane and legal response?

One option examined by the Obama administration, and now being pursued more actively by the Trump administration, is to push the problem to Mexico. The idea is to strike a bilateral deal requiring migrants to seek protection by applying for asylum there rather than here. In theory, it makes some sense; Europe pursued a similar deal with Turkey in 2016, at a cost exceeding \$6 billion, to stanch the flow of refugees from Syria. In practice, it is a terrible idea that would subject migrants from Central America and elsewhere to further violence and danger, and probably do little to curb illegal immigration to the United States.

In 2002, the United States and Canada secured a similar arrangement, known as a "safe third country" agreement. It has worked because Canada is, in fact, a

safe third country: Migrants who apply for asylum there are secure, and their cases are fairly adjudicated.

By contrast, Mexico is patently unsuitable as a place of refuge for most migrants, especially those from Central America, who suffer exploitation, violence and sexual assault almost routinely as they make their way north. In a recent report, Doctors Without Borders noted that two-thirds of Guatemalan, Salvadoran and Honduran migrants in Mexico have reported being victims of violence; almost a third of migrant women there had been sexually assaulted. Twelve of the world's 50 most violent cities are in Mexico. Forcing refugees to seek sanctuary in Mexico would thrust tens of thousands of them into a country with weak law enforcement, a flimsy judicial system, an anemic asylum process and predatory criminal gangs.

Under those circumstances, it is folly to think migrants would stay put. Much more likely, they would simply find a way to enter the United States illegally, even without the chance to apply for asylum here.

Administration officials may hope to exert leverage to induce Mexico to accept such a deal, perhaps in return for a break on tariffs or the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which President Trump has threatened to curtail. They may seek to exploit President Enrique Peña Nieto's current lame-duck period, before his elected successor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, takes office Dec. 1.

That doesn't change Mexico's on-the-ground reality.

This is not an argument for open borders. Rather, the right response, and the one most likely to succeed in the long term, is for the United States to redouble efforts to strengthen governments and fight the lawlessness that has seized Central America's refugee-producing countries. Short of that, the administration's efforts will be self-defeating.

An Iranian Caricaturist Got A Visa Despite The Travel Ban. Now She's Drawing Trump.

By James Barron, New York (NY) Times

[New York Times](#), July 22, 2018

Nasrin Sheykhi's latest Donald Trump painting was on the counter, but she was talking about an earlier piece. "I made his character a wild animal stamped 'Made in Russia,'" she said.

After all the headlines about Russian interference in the 2016 election, her fans call her prescient. But what makes Ms. Sheykhi unusual is not just her work as a caricaturist. It is also that she is a Muslim woman from Iran who had never been to the United States until after the Trump administration's ban on travel from several

predominantly Muslim countries. She came — first to Philadelphia, now to New York — only after the government had given her a green card.

To listen to Ms. Sheykhi is to hear another account of women in a country where the government has relentlessly tightened its grip on both women and freedom of expression. It is also to hear about someone who says she was “a noisy girl with infinite energy” when she was a child. Now she seems to have infinite fearlessness.

Ms. Sheykhi, 29, received what is known informally as an “Einstein visa,” — officially an EB-1A visa — which often goes to famous people who the government decides have “extraordinary ability” in such fields as science, education and the arts. Ms. Sheykhi took some of the government’s terminology and used it in the title of an exhibition of her works that opens on Tuesday at NoMo SoHo, at 9 Crosby Street: “Alien of Extraordinary Ability: the EB-1A Tour.”

She is following caricaturists from Thomas Nast to Al Hirschfeld who have given their subjects chins that were wider than wide, cheeks that were more jowly than jolly and eyebrows that were longer than long. Ms. Sheykhi’s Michael R. Bloomberg has a nose that looks like the Flatiron Building. Ms. Sheykhi meant it as a compliment — the Flatiron Building is “a symbol of New York for me,” she said, “and very classy.” Besides, she likes Mr. Bloomberg. “He did a lot for New York and he did a lot for art and he’s very rich,” she said, “but he never mentioned ‘I’m very rich,’ unlike Trump.”

Two of her other recent caricatures, of the hard-living retro soul star Amy Winehouse and of the Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, are set against the red-and-white color scheme of a pack of Marlboro cigarettes. Ms. Sheykhi, who does not smoke, copied a pack a friend gave her. Then she used the actual pack in yet another portrait, this one of Mick Jagger. She said she could sense “the smoke from his talking.”

It is not the only found object she has used in collages. She made James Brown’s toothy-looking smile look toothier with a round container that once held cheese wedges. The mouth of an earlier Mick Jagger was a shiny CD.

As a student, she acquired a following outside Iran thanks to social media and competitions in other countries that she entered online. When she applied for the EB-1A, her lawyer, Joseph E. Best, submitted 700 pages of material, including testimonials from other artists. Among them was one from Steve Brodner, whose work has appeared in major publications since the 1970s and who has taught at the School of Visual Arts and the Fashion Institute of Technology. Of Ms. Sheykhi, he said, “There has never been a portraitist who has so

successfully combined collage and caricature in the interest of commentary.”

The illustrator Jason Seiler said he had been so impressed that he showed her work to art directors at The New Yorker. “The business I am in is very competitive, so I rarely will do something like that,” he said.

Her lawyer, Mr. Best, said he had argued that her recognition beyond Iran “and the potential political value of her resisting the theocratic interests of the government in Iran” were in the United States’ national interest.

“To my complete surprise, we got the visa,” he said. He said it was exempt from the travel ban. Ms. Sheykhi can come and go as she pleases.

Ms. Sheykhi said that when she heard that the first lady, Melania Trump, received the same kind of visa in 2001 when she was a model, “I was thinking maybe that visa is not as good as I was thinking,” she said. “Melania?”

She mentioned John Lennon, another “Einstein visa” recipient. “I was very proud” to be in the same category, Ms. Sheykhi said. “Melania is not like that. For example, the jacket she was wearing. What genius would do that?”

Ms. Sheykhi was born in Bushehr, Iran, a Persian Gulf port city, but soon moved to Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf and lived there until she was 8. It seemed far removed from the rest of a country that hard-liners increasingly dominated.

“On that island, the government could not control the channels” on television, she said. “Me and my brothers, we were watching cartoons, ‘Tom and Jerry’ even. Then my mother decided to move to Shiraz. She said it was for the quality of education there. I could see no channels — no cartoons, and there was Islamic music. After a while, she told me, ‘You should wear a scarf.’” Her mother also discouraged riding a bicycle, something she had enjoyed doing.

“I could not understand the difference between me and my brothers,” she said. “They were boys and I was a girl. I still cannot understand why there is a difference. Men and women are the same. A woman’s brain and a woman’s heart are the same.”

She enrolled at the Shiraz University of Art and Architecture and organized a 60-piece exhibition of her cartoons and caricatures. She hoped she would meet other student caricaturists who came to her show.

“This is when I discovered that I was the only caricature artist in the student body,” she said.

She did paintings of women, only to be told by a gallery manager that it was illegal to show them. She said she asked one of her professors why he had bothered with teaching her to draw them.

She said his answer was, "I don't know." He also said, "This is what I have to teach you, this is our society, and you should be careful." She said it reminded her of "The Castle," a Franz Kafka novel she had read.

She said another professor told her she could be a great artist if she didn't get addicted to drugs "and if you get out of this country."

So she did.

Now, about the Trump caricature on the counter. It is "Donald Trump No. 4," a teeny image surrounded by a big white frame. Her Janis Joplin painting, by contrast, is much larger. "She was more important," Ms. Sheykhi said.

She said that a president should be as big as the frame. And, in this case, she meant for the frame to symbolize the White House.

"He is not matched by the place where he is as president," she said.

Biden Rips Trump Immigration Policy: 'One Of The Darkest Moments In Our History'

By Jesse Byrnes

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

Former Vice President Joe Biden on Friday laid into President Trump's "zero tolerance" immigration policy, calling the resulting separation of thousands of migrant families "one of the darkest moments in our history."

"Grotesque lies — lies about immigrants, about crime, about costs to the community. They're simply lies — factually inaccurate," Biden told a crowd in Phoenix at the national convention for the Latino civil rights organization LULAC, according to NBC News.

"And look folks, this administration's policies that literally rip babies from the arms of their mothers and fathers — one of the darkest moments in our history," Biden added.

The Trump administration has reunited 450 children between the ages of 5 and 17 with their parents one week before a court-imposed deadline. They are part of the some 2,500 children taken into U.S. custody after being separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border.

A federal judge who has criticized the administration's tardiness while reuniting the families offered praise during a status hearing Friday, saying "it really does appear there's been great progress" on reunifications ahead of next week's deadline.

"The reunifications are happening very rapidly, which is good. A big block will be reunified in a timely manner," U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw said.

Trump signed an executive order last month ending his administration's controversial practice of separating children from their parents while the adults are prosecuted for illegally crossing the border.

But critics have continued to hammer the administration as it works to reunite hundreds of children with their parents.

Biden broadened his attacks on Trump during his speech to Latino activists in Arizona on Friday night, accusing the administration of an "assault on our dignity."

"It doesn't just reveal itself in the betrayal of the Dreamers or the pardoning of a sheriff who has terrorized the community," he said, according to NBC. "It is also in the underfunding of our schools, and the attacks on labor, and the ability of workers to bargain for their own worth."

Biden, who has not ruled out a 2020 presidential bid, has clashed with Trump periodically over the past couple of years and has ratcheted up his criticism of the president in recent months.

In June, he criticized the results of Trump's summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and slammed Trump's controversial joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki earlier this week, calling it "beneath the dignity" of the presidency.

Trump on Thursday told CBS News that the former vice president would be his "dream" opponent in the 2020 race.

"I dream about Biden. That's a dream," Trump said. "Look, Joe Biden ran three times. He never got more than 1 percent and President Obama took him out of the garbage heap, and everybody was shocked that he did. I'd love to have it be Biden."

Gillibrand: Democrats Should Immediately Abolish ICE Once They Take Back Congress

By Peter Hasson

[Daily Caller](#), July 22, 2018

Democrats should immediately move to abolish the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if they regain majorities in Congress, Democratic New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand said on Sunday.

"So when we flip the House and flip the Senate, I think the first thing we should do is deal with the children who have been separated from their families at the border. I think we should get rid of ICE," Gillibrand said at the New York City festival OZY Fest, where she shared a stage with left-wing actress Chelsea Handler.

"We should separate out two missions, the anti-terrorism mission, the national security mission, and then on the other side make sure you're do, making sure

you're looking at immigration as a humanitarian issue," Gillibrand added. (RELATED: Gillibrand, Warren Have Opposed Over 90 Percent Of Trump Nominees)

"These are civil issues, these are families, look at it as the economic engine that it is, that immigration is our strength, our diversity is what makes our country and our economy so strong," she said.

The senator also said that Democrats should also move on "all" of the gun control issues within the first month of taking back Congress.

"I think we should pass the gun reform issues within the first month — all of them. Universal background checks, anti-trafficking, making sure people can't buy bump stocks, large magazine clips, all that work," she said.

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Detention Operators Face Suits Over \$1-A-Day Work Programs For Migrants

Private prison companies are accused of breaking laws by paying migrants \$1 a day; the companies say the work is voluntary

By Zusha Elinson

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 21, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Lawyers: Asylum Seekers Endure Horrible Conditions In Prison

By Andrew Selsky

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Strip searches. Overcrowded cells with open toilets. Scant meals that violate religious restrictions.

Federal public defenders say 120 asylum seekers are enduring those conditions at a federal prison in Oregon where some have considered suicide and at least one has attempted it.

"We are dying day by day inside here," one detainee said, William Teesdale, chief investigator for the federal public defender's office in Oregon, wrote in a filing in federal court in Portland.

The immigrant was unwilling to be identified in the filing due to fear of persecution or retaliation, Teesdale said in the documents.

Most of the asylum seekers held at the prison in rural Sheridan say they faced risks in their home countries, including India, Nepal, Guatemala, Mexico and China.

Instead of being welcomed to the U.S., they ran into the "zero-tolerance" policy of the Trump

administration that calls for the detention of people who try to enter the country illegally.

"Here we have come to save our lives but I think we will die here in jail," one detainee said, according to Teesdale's affidavit.

Several detainees have untreated medical conditions, including a heart problem, gunshot wound and broken leg.

He said they are triple-bunked and confined for long hours in cells with open toilets. They must eat in the cells and have no indoor or outdoor recreational opportunities.

They are strip-searched in front of other detainees, and Hindus were given beef and pork to eat, even though it's against their religion, and tried to survive on just the vegetables accompanying the meals, Teesdale said.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement recently transferred four detainees to a center in Tacoma, Washington, for specialized medical care, ICE spokeswoman Clarissa Cutrell said.

The agency has no comment on the conditions in Sheridan due to pending litigation, Cutrell said.

Leland Baxter-Neal, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, called the conditions inhumane and unconstitutional.

The Trump administration's decision to put the immigrants in the prison, where they mixed for three weeks with the general prison population, has caused "chaos, confusion and massive human suffering," he said.

Federal Public Defender Lisa Hay said in a letter to Warden Josaias Salazar and Acting ICE Field Office Director Elizabeth Godfrey that her office learned of an apparent suicide attempt by a detainee.

"Both those who witnessed the incident and those who heard of it have expressed great distress," Hay said.

Other detainees also considered killing themselves, court documents state.

Petitions were filed Wednesday by Hay's office seeking court hearings for five detainees, whose names were redacted because of their security concerns.

"I have to cry in my pillow," an immigrant identified as ICE detainee No. 1 said in his habeas corpus brief. "I have suicidal thoughts but then I remember my family. My family is all that keeps me going."

The public affairs office of the Federal Bureau of Prisons did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A statement filed in court shows the prison had to scramble to take in the immigrants, who were sent there

because other holding facilities used by ICE were overloaded.

The prison received only one day of notice — on May 30 — that about 130 detainees would be arriving, Amberly Newman, an adviser to the prison warden, said in a declaration in federal court.

She said they had to be mixed with the general prison population for the first three weeks before they could be separated into different units.

One of the detainees described guards making him and his two cellmates strip to their underwear.

"In the night, it gets so cold in the cell and when I was in boxers and T-shirt, I was terribly cold," he said, according to his habeas corpus filing.

Victoria Bejarano Muirhead of Innovation Law Lab said her Portland-based group has engaged over 80 volunteers to provide legal services to the detainees.

Those seeking asylum must show authorities they have credible fear in their homelands. Twenty of those immigrants at the prison have provided statements that lead to hearings before a judge, Muirhead said in a conference call with journalists.

Hay wrote on July 9 to Salazar and Godfrey that some conditions have improved, "but continue to fall below the minimum standards set by our government for immigration detention and, in my view, violate the Constitution by imposing punitive detention on civil detainees."

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>

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Guatemalan Pleads Guilty In Crash That Killed Colts Player

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A Guatemalan man living illegally in the U.S. pleaded guilty Friday to driving drunk in a crash that killed Indianapolis Colts linebacker Edwin Jackson and his Uber driver.

Manuel Orrego-Savala, 37, pleaded guilty to two counts of operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content of .15 or more, causing death.

Orrego-Savala had a BAC of 0.19 percent, or more than twice Indiana's legal limit of .08 percent, when his truck crashed into Uber driver Jeffrey Monroe, 54, of Avon and Jackson, 26, as they stood outside Monroe's car on the shoulder of Interstate 70. Investigators have said Monroe was transporting Jackson for the ride-

sharing service on Feb. 4 and had pulled over after Jackson became ill.

Orrego-Savala is due to be sentenced Sept. 14 and faces a possible maximum sentence of 16 years in prison and a possible fine of up to \$20,000.

Under a plea agreement, prosecutors agreed to drop two counts of failing to remain at the scene of an accident.

Orrego-Savala was deported from the U.S. in 2007 and 2009 and was back in the country illegally at the time of the crash, authorities said.

The case became a flash point in the nation's immigration debate, with President Donald Trump tweeting about it and Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mike Braun featuring it in an Indiana campaign advertisement.

Savala also faces charges of perjury, forgery, identity deception and false informing out of Boone County for allegedly using the alias of Alex Cabrera Gonsales 2017 for driving without a license. Savala initially identified himself as Cabrera Gonsales to police following the February crash.

Additionally, federal immigration officials have filed charges of illegal re-entry by a previously deported alien against Savala.

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Judge Rejects US Efforts To Strip Citizenship From Terrorist Jailed In Illinois

[Associated Press](#), July 21, 2018

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The government can't strip a terrorist of his U.S. citizenship, a federal judge ruled this month in a decision siding with a Pakistan-born man serving the last few years of a 20-year prison sentence for his guilty plea to plotting to destroy New York's Brooklyn Bridge.

The case involves Lyman Faris, who was sentenced in 2003 for aiding and abetting al-Qaida by scoping out the bridge as part of a plot to cut through cables that support it. His case was among the first and highest-profile terrorism cases after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Faris met with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and worked with Sept. 11 architect Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, although some critics questioned how realistic the plot was, given post-Sept. 11 security in New York.

A court filing last year in U.S. District Court in southern Illinois argued that Faris lied on immigration papers before becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen in

1999 and that his terrorist affiliations demonstrated a lack of commitment to the U.S. Constitution.

"The U.S. government is dedicated to ... preventing the exploitation of our nation's immigration system by those who would do harm to our country," Chad Readler, acting assistant attorney of the Department of Justice's civil division, said in a statement at the time.

The government filed in Illinois because Faris was imprisoned there then. He has since been moved to federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Faris, who's 49, was known as Mohammad Rauf before becoming a U.S. citizen, worked as a truck driver in Columbus and was married to an American woman for a while. He is scheduled for release Dec. 23, 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

Federal Judge Staci Yanle said this month there's not enough evidence to prove Faris' misrepresentations influenced the decision to grant him citizenship.

"American citizenship is precious, and the government carries a heavy burden of proof when attempting to divest a naturalized citizen of his or her citizenship," she wrote on July 11.

The Department of Justice declined to comment.

One of many objections raised by Faris' attorney is that the government's action violated the terms of his 2003 plea agreement, which never included the possibility of denaturalization or deportation.

"We look forward to defending this case," Chicago defense attorney Thomas Durkin said. "It's a wrong-headed decision by the government to proceed in this fashion."

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D.C. Attorney General Demands Information From ICE After Recent Arrests

By Reis Thebault

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

D.C. Attorney General Karl A. Racine is asking Immigration and Customs Enforcement for information about the agency's recent arrests of as many as 12 District residents.

"Last week's incidents are precisely the kind that spark fear in our city ... and, more broadly, undermine the ability of our immigrant communities to participate fully in the civic life of the District," Racine (D) wrote in a letter Thursday to Ronald D. Vitiello, the agency's acting director.

Racine said he was seeking details about the arrests, which activists and local residents said they took

place between July 9 and July 12 at a private home, local businesses and in front of an apartment complex in Columbia Heights, home to a significant Central American community.

In his letter, Racine was particularly concerned that federal agents targeted the neighborhood.

"Disturbingly, some reports suggest that individuals may have been apprehended indiscriminately or as a result of racial or ethnic profiling," he wrote.

A spokesperson for ICE did not respond to a request for comment about the Attorney General's letter.

In a statement days after the arrests, ICE spokesperson Justine M. Whelan said that agents do "not conduct raids or target individuals indiscriminately."

Details of the arrests, the number and identities of those detained and the charges against them have not been made public. Spokespeople for Racine's office and D.C. police said, as of Friday afternoon, ICE had not communicated with them about its enforcement actions.

"Transparency about the policies and procedures ICE follows when engaging in enforcement activity is central to the ability of our immigrant communities to feel secure here," Racine wrote in the letter.

He requested that Vitiello send the Office of the Attorney General information on those taken into custody, along with the location where they are being held. Racine also asked for ICE policies on profiling, probable cause before detention and whether agents had to clearly identify themselves during enforcement actions. As of Friday afternoon, Racine's office had not received a reply.

On Monday, several hundred immigrant rights activists, clergy and supporters held a demonstration in Columbia Heights, chanting "ICE out of D.C.!"

The Office of the Attorney General advised residents in English and Spanish language social media posts that they don't have to allow ICE agents without warrants into their homes and they can demand a lawyer be present before they speak with ICE officials.

Racine's latest challenge of the federal government's immigration policies comes less than a month after he joined a group of 15 state attorneys general that sued the Trump Administration over its policy of separating families at the border.

The day before Racine sent his letter, D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser said in a statement that D.C. "is a sanctuary city" that protects "the rights and humanity of all our residents."

"As a community, it is on all of us to stand up for our neighbors," Bowser said.

Meanwhile, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), the District's nonvoting representative in Congress, has

requested a briefing from ICE to learn more about the arrests.

Federal Judge Denies Gay Ugandan Woman's Plea For Release, Stay Of Removal

By Maria Cramer

[Boston Globe](#), July 20, 2018

A Massachusetts federal court judge ruled late Thursday that he has no jurisdiction to delay deportation proceedings of a gay Ugandan woman who has said she believes she could be persecuted, and even killed, if she returns to Uganda, where homosexuality is illegal and punishable by life in prison.

Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV said that by law, the decision of whether to stay the removal of the woman while government officials weigh her claim for asylum based on her sexuality rests with immigration authorities, not the federal district court.

"The Court is unwilling to ignore or defy the law, even in highly sympathetic circumstances," he wrote in a 21-page ruling. "To do so would be a fundamental violation of its most basic responsibilities."

The Globe is withholding the woman's name at her attorneys' request because they fear her sexual status could put her in danger if she is deported back to Uganda.

In his decision, Saylor cited a 2005 law known as the "Real ID Act" that stripped courts of the authority to review challenges by immigrants to final orders of removal "in the plainest of language."

Saylor's decision followed an impassioned plea Tuesday by the woman's attorneys, who argued that sending her back to Uganda could be tantamount to a death sentence. They had asked Saylor to order the woman's release from custody of the Office of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, whose officers arrested her May 31, and argued that Saylor had the authority to stay orders of removal so the woman could at least have a chance to plead her case to immigration officials.

They noted that other judges had done so, notably Massachusetts Chief District Judge Patti B. Saris, who in 2017 delayed efforts to deport 51 Indonesian Christians back to their Muslim-majority country.

Harvey Kaplan, one of the woman's attorneys, said he was "shocked" by Saylor's decision.

"Sometimes judges look for every reason to be helpful and sometimes judges look for every reason not to be," Kaplan said. "We feel like that's what happened here."

Andrew Lelling, US attorney for Massachusetts, supported the judge's ruling in a statement.

"Judge Saylor's ruling re-affirms that federal district courts have only a narrow role to play in reviewing immigration disputes beyond detention issues," he said. "By law, any other dispute should be resolved by the Executive Branch through the immigration authorities."

I applaud Judge Saylor for rejecting the temptations of judicial activism and following the rule of law."

And John Mohan, the spokesman for ICE, which was accused by the woman's lawyers of detaining her unlawfully, said they were "gratified" by Saylor's decision.

It "confirms the appropriateness of our actions in this case," Mohan said.

Kaplan said Saylor's decision could be appealed to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. The woman also has a motion to reopen her immigration case before the Board of Immigration Appeals, or BIA, which has the power to order a stay of removal order once ICE gives a deportation date. Melanie Shapiro, another attorney for the woman, said an official at the BIA told her she may know by next week whether a stay would be issued.

Meanwhile, Shapiro said, the woman's 9-year-old daughter, a US citizen, is missing "precious time" with her mother, who is being held in a Suffolk County jail.

"Now she doesn't know if and when her mom will come home," Shapiro said.

The Ugandan woman came to the United States in 2001, overstayed her visa, then entered into a phony marriage that led to a conviction in 2012 and one-year prison sentence.

When she was released from prison, she was apprehended by ICE and given a final order of removal, but was released and allowed to remain free as she contested her deportation. In 2015, the BIA rejected her immigration claim that she be allowed to stay in the country in part because of her sexual status, which Saylor noted in his decision.

"In particular, the BIA found that her affidavit, which stated that she did not realize she was a lesbian until she was detained by ICE, was not credible," Saylor wrote.

He said her credibility also was undermined by the "lies" she told under oath during her 2012 trial, some of which she has continued to tell immigration officials.

"To be sure, there are ample reasons to question [her] story," Saylor wrote. "But whether she is telling the truth as to her sexual orientation and other circumstances of her life is not for this Court to decide."

Shapiro said her client, a devout Christian, has known she was gay since she was a teenager "but because of cultural and religious stigma and that

homosexuality is a crime in Uganda, she had to hide who she was.”

She finally came out to her family in 2014 after she fell in love with another inmate while in detention, Shapiro said. The woman's sexuality has been confirmed by family members, friends, and her former partner, she said.

“There is overwhelming evidence that she is gay,” Shapiro said.

Sarah Sherman-Stokes, associate director of the Immigrants' Rights and Human Trafficking Program at Boston University, said that even though the Real ID Act stripped district courts of jurisdiction in some immigration matters, judges can still consider personal circumstances in a case. “They do in fact have the authority to stay deportation when they think a person's due process rights are at risk,” she said. Maria Cramer can be reached at mcramer@globe.com.

Follow her on Twitter @globemcramer

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

San Diego Navy Commander Pleads Guilty To Dark Web Drug Charge

By Alex Riggins

[San Diego Union-Tribune](#), July 20, 2018

A Navy commander with 23 years of military service pleaded guilty to a drug charge Friday in San Diego federal court, admitting that he conspired to buy and sell ecstasy and other drugs on the dark web over at least an 18-month period that ended with his March arrest at his Hillcrest condo.

Adolph Garza, 54, faces a maximum of 20 years in prison, and a fine up to \$500,000, when he's sentenced in December. He pleaded guilty Friday in U.S. District Court to conspiracy to distribute controlled substances by internet.

The San Diego resident admitted using the dark web to make multiple purchases of ecstasy, ketamine, cocaine, amphetamine and other controlled substances over an 18-month period from August 2016 to March of this year.

Garza was arrested during a March 7 raid at his Hillcrest condo, according to Sherri Walker Hobson, an assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California.

While serving the search warrant at Garza's residence, inspectors from the U.S. Postal Service and special agents from Homeland Security Investigations and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service seized ecstasy, cocaine, ketamine, amphetamine and other

controlled substances. They also discovered sealers, packaging and mailing materials, including DVD cases that were used to conceal what was being shipped.

According to court documents, a package of ecstasy from the Netherlands was bound for Garza's condo unit on Aug. 12, 2016, when it was intercepted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection investigators at the Chicago International Mail Facility.

It was the first of more than a dozen packages sent to Garza that was found to contain illegal drugs, according to Postal Inspector David Jones.

Four days after the first package was seized, another shipment of ecstasy was seized at the same Chicago airport.

The other shipments of ecstasy bound for Garza's address were discovered at airports in Chicago, San Francisco and New York, and at mailboxes in San Diego.

According to investigators and federal prosecutors, Garza's name and address were also discovered on two separate drug ledgers during investigations into other dark-web drug distributors.

Garza is set to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Cynthia Bashant. While he faces up to 20 years in federal custody, prosecutors agreed in a plea deal to recommend “the low end of the advisory guideline,” though it's not yet clear what the advisory guideline will be.

Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 10.

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San Diego Navy Commander Admits Using Dark Web To Buy, Sell Illegal Drugs

[Times of San Diego](#), July 20, 2018

A career Navy commander pleaded guilty in San Diego federal court Friday to drug charges, admitting that he conspired to distribute, deliver and dispense controlled substances by way of the Internet.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Adolph Garza, a 54-year-old San Diego resident, admitted using the dark web to make multiple purchases of various controlled substances, including ecstasy, ketamine, cocaine, amphetamine and other controlled substances over an 18-month period from August 2016 to March of this year.

According to his plea agreement, Garza, a 23-year Navy veteran, used multiple dark web market places to order controlled substances for distribution in San Diego and beyond.

Garza admitted that on at least 15 occasions, the drugs he ordered were the same ones seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection at airports in San

Francisco, New York and Chicago; and by U.S. Postal Inspectors and Homeland Security Investigations agents in San Diego.

Garza was arrested March 7 following a search of his San Diego condominium.

Inside his residence, agents found sealers, packaging and mailing materials, and concealment mailing methods (including DVD cases). Federal agents also seized MDMA, cocaine, ketamine, amphetamine and other controlled substances.

Garza is scheduled to be sentenced Dec. 10.

— City News Service

Driver Pleads Guilty In Death Of Colts Player

By Mark Alesia, Vic Ryckaert And Holly V. Hays
[Indianapolis Star](#), July 20, 2018

A man charged with drunken driving that caused the deaths of an Indianapolis Colts player and an Uber driver pleaded guilty Friday in Marion County.

Manuel Orrego-Savala faces 10 to 16 years in jail after pleading guilty to two counts of causing death of another person when operating a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.15 percent or more.

The crash killed Indianapolis Colts linebacker Edwin Jackson and Uber driver Jeffrey Monroe.

Sentencing is scheduled Sept. 14 in Marion Superior Court.

Orrego-Savala, a 37-year-old Guatemalan, also is facing federal charges of illegal re-entry of a previously deported alien.

His arrest after the crash prompted a tweet from President Trump, who pointed toward the tragedy as a reason to support tougher immigration laws.

Orrego-Savala was arrested early on Feb. 4 after Indiana State Police say the Ford F-150 pickup truck he was driving careened into the emergency shoulder of I-70.

After Orrego-Savala's arrest, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security agent began reviewing his file, according to a criminal complaint.

The complaint detailed Orrego-Savala's numerous aliases, including the name given at the scene of the crash, Alex Cabrera. His other aliases include variations on the spelling of Orrego-Savala.

The agent confirmed Orrego-Savala's identity by submitting his fingerprints into a federal database, the complaint says.

Orrego-Savala is believed to have entered the country illegally on or around July 1, 2004, Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman Nicole Alberico said in February. He was convicted of driving

under the influence in Redwood City, Calif., in 2005, Alberico said.

In October 2006, he was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in San Francisco and deported in January 2007, according to the complaint.

A little more than two years later, in March 2009, he was again arrested in San Francisco and then deported that May.

It's still unclear when he re-entered the U.S. or traveled to Indiana.

Boone County officials said Orrego-Savala, under the name Alex Cabrera-Gonsales, pleaded guilty in 2017 to driving without ever having received a license. The sheriff's office did not report him to ICE at that time because it was not legally required to do so for that offense, according to a news release.

In February, Orrego-Savala was charged in Boone Superior Court with four felony counts related to identity deception.

Contact Mark Alesia at 317-444-6311. Follow him on Twitter: @markalesia.

SECRET SERVICE

Secret Service Wants To Share Its Expertise To Prevent Mass Shooting At Schools

By Tess Bonn

[The Hill](#), July 20, 2018

The Secret Service is looking to share its expertise in identifying would-be assassins with school districts in hopes of thwarting future mass shootings by students.

The agency earlier this month began sharing an eight-step operational guide with local school districts, in direct response to concerns raised by the recent mass shootings in Parkland, Fla., and Santa Fe, Texas.

"It gives you step-by-step actionable activities that schools can take that standardize the process that can identify students who might be in distress or exhibiting concerning behavior," explained Lina Alathari, chief of the Secret Service's Threat Assessment Team.

She added the information being shared with schools also included "how to gather information from multiple sources and assess the risk the student pose for engaging in not only harm against the school, but also possible harm to themselves."

The agency first began studying targeted attacks at schools after the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. It found that there is no specific profile that fits a school shooter.

Alathari said the profile of each shooter was different, whether on academic achievement, popularity, or social relations.

"Some were high performers, some were poor performers," Alathari said in terms of academic performance.

"You have well-liked popular students: one was a prom king, another was a church deacon. You also had the loners and more isolated students. They came from various backgrounds family-wise, so there really is not one profile," she added.

The intervention from one of America's premier law enforcement agencies comes as school districts are preparing for fall classes at a time when parental concern for their children's safety is soaring.

A new poll released by PDK International shows that one in three parents are concerned for their child's physical safety at school, the highest in 20 years.

"That's some serious implications for principals, teachers, kids, superintendents, school boards," said Joshua Starr, a former school administrator in suburban Washington, D.C., who is now the chief executive officer for PDK.

Starr said schools "have to reinforce to their communities, parents" that they have "maintained safety" for their children.

The guide from the Secret Service says that schools should create threat assessment teams as the first step in creating a prevention plan.

It also lays out an evaluation process that staff can use to determine which behaviors are unacceptable and warrant intervention. The behaviors include threatening others, committing violence, bringing a weapon to school and bullying.

Alathari says the Secret Service got positive feedback from school administrators, parents and students after visiting with them in Florida.

However, Starr said school administrators are likely to have concerns about the costs, legal issues and their expertise in implementing the Secret Service recommendations.

"I think there's a lot of things they don't know about how schools work and just operations aspects, legal aspects," Starr said, "The cost alone is significant. It requires people and time; not only have school districts been underfunded, particularly since 2008 recession, but knowing how to do this is really hard."

"We spend all our time on academics. What they lay out is important, good guidance, but the actual implementation within an American school district is so much more complex," he added.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

FEMA Talks Flood Insurance

[WFTS-TV Tampa \(FL\)](#), July 20, 2018

FEMA Talks Flood Insurance

Hurricane Scalise

A GOP leader wants to scuttle even minor flood insurance reform.

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Puerto Rican Evacuees Get Another Extension On Housing

By Mike Schneider

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Hundreds of Hurricane Maria evacuees from Puerto Rico who are living in hotels around the nation have been given more weeks to use temporary housing vouchers, after a federal judge extended a temporary restraining order.

U.S. District Judge Timothy Hillman on Thursday ruled they can use the assistance through at least checkout time on Aug. 7.

Hillman said he wants to hold another hearing on the evacuees' request to keep the Transitional Sheltering Assistance program going and he expects to issue an order on Aug. 6.

The evacuees have been living in hotels on the mainland since they fled the island after Hurricane Maria last September. Evacuees sued the Federal Emergency Management Agency earlier this month, just hours before the housing assistance was supposed to end.

Officials with FEMA said in a statement that participating hotels were being notified about the new extension. FEMA is offering to cover the cost of evacuees moving back to island through the end of August.

As of Friday, 675 evacuated families were using the vouchers on the mainland and another 375 families were using the vouchers on the island, according to FEMA. Florida had the most evacuated families using the vouchers on the mainland, with 326, followed by Massachusetts with 166 families.

In new affidavits filed with the court, Puerto Rican evacuees said they feared losing the housing vouchers.

Elizabeth Delgado Santos came to Worcester, Massachusetts last January with her two children to live with her mother but her mother kicked them out after a few weeks and they became homeless. She started using the vouchers last February at a Worcester motel.

She said she has felt tremendous fear and anxiety since being told the assistance was ending, because she has no other housing options and no support system.

"I would wake up and go to sleep at night with severe stress and anxiety about where I would sleep with my children," she wrote.

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More Than 1,000 Puerto Rican Families Are Still Living In Hotels After Maria. We Can Do Better.

By Michael Windle And Tim Russell

[Huffington Post](#), July 21, 2018

In the Hurricane Maria aftermath, the U.S. government has supported hotel stays for Puerto Rican survivors who evacuated to states like Florida, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

At a SpringHill Suites in Queens, New York, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's hotel stay program provided shelter for Yanitza Cruz, her husband Joel García and their two children as they began creating a new home for themselves in New York rather than returning to Puerto Rico. And at an Extended Stay America in Florida, Richard Gonzalez declined a government-funded one-way plane ticket back to Puerto Rico, instead choosing to pursue steady employment in Fort Lauderdale so he can support his family back on the island. These hotel stays have become a recurring part of America's disaster-response toolkit.

Today, 11 months after Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, we should be applauding the success of federally funded and state-implemented programs that create job opportunities and housing options for Puerto Ricans who have chosen to make new lives – and new homes – in states like Massachusetts, New York or Florida. Instead, we are watching an unfolding legal battle in federal court in Massachusetts, where three rulings in the last three weeks have temporarily extended hotel stays for Hurricane Maria survivors still displaced to the continental United States. On Thursday, the hotel support was extended once more, this time until Aug. 7.

Yes, these legal proceedings provide short-term certainty to the more than 1,000 Puerto Rican families still displaced as of July 19. They fail, however, to address the root problem: The U.S. has a disaster system with few permanent relocation mechanisms, even if that's what the survivors themselves want. Programs that support the permanent relocation of

families after a disaster are something governors and mayors are unlikely to request.

Virtually no elected official will advocate for survivors who wish to make a new home outside of their community, since leaders of disaster-impacted cities and states naturally try to curb outward migration. Elected officials, rightly so, want to maintain their community's tax base, population and sense of identity as they pursue a speedy path to recovery. And through the concept of local primacy, FEMA supports, not supplants, the wishes of these locally elected leaders.

While America emphasizes the need for survivor-centric recovery programs, the mayors and governors who make requests for federal support are charged with rebuilding their own communities, not helping their residents relocate elsewhere. In an October letter requesting housing support from FEMA, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló described the island's citizens as "the fabric of the community," writing "it is critical that any government assistance not encourage people to relocate permanently." Similarly, nearly a year after Detroit's 2013 bankruptcy, then-Mayor Mike Duggan said, "the single standard a mayor should be defined on is whether the population of the city is going up or going down."

Unique to Hurricane Maria's aftermath is the extent to which elected officials from outside Puerto Rico openly debated the types of housing support the island should request. Florida Sens. Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson urged the Puerto Rican governor and FEMA to deliver housing support faster, and Florida's members of Congress requested housing for Puerto Ricans in Florida – roles not traditionally taken by elected leaders of neighboring states. Florida Gov. Rick Scott has even noted the limitations his state faces with its housing programs for Puerto Ricans, despite Florida's status as a host state.

These Florida officials are embracing the fact that many survivors want to, and do, move after a disaster. This is true not only for Hurricane Maria, but also historically. Following Los Angeles' 1994 Northridge earthquake, 6 percent of Californians surveyed said it was very likely they would move out of state due to earthquake fears. In 2006, one year after Hurricane Katrina, 47 percent of adult New Orleans residents had not returned to the area. Survivors should be able to choose between programs geared to returning and rebuilding and those providing permanent relocation services.

Support for permanent relocation is not unheard of. Taxpayers have funded relocation for a Pennsylvania town atop an underground coal fire and a Louisiana community suffering from rising sea water. During the Dust Bowl, a federal agency was created to attempt

farmer relocation by the hundreds. But these are the exceptions. Programs that support the permanent relocation of families after a disaster are something governors and mayors are unlikely to request.

Of course, there are important benefits to keeping communities intact after a disaster. Among them is maintaining connections and providing recovery services for disaster survivors who haven't spread out. Forced relocation should be avoided at all costs. And there is strong evidence that deep social connections and a shared narrative help a community recover more quickly from a disaster. Many people want to return and rebuild their homes, and existing FEMA programs are built to support that.

But not giving survivors the choice between rebuilding programs and relocation programs precludes the possibility that a disaster survivor may have their strongest social and familial network outside the disaster-impacted area. That is why survivors should be able to choose between programs geared to returning and rebuilding, and those providing permanent relocation services.

On Aug. 6, legal proceedings in Massachusetts likely will give families still displaced by Hurricane Maria more clarity about what additional support they can get in the weeks and months ahead. But it will do nothing to create survivor-centric disaster relocation programs that could help these families the most — programs that America's current disaster response structure is not built to support.

Michael Windle and Tim Russell are researchers at MIT's Humanitarian Supply Chain Lab — based within the MIT Center for Transportation and Logistics. They have done research funded by FEMA, including FEMA's ongoing housing improvement efforts.

Judge Extends FEMA Maria Emergency Aid And Sets A Hearing

By Crystal Chavez

[WMFE-FM Orlando \(FL\)](#), July 20, 2018

A judge has again ordered an extension of FEMA's temporary shelter program for displaced Puerto Ricans. The judge is giving families until midnight August 6 to stay in hotels. That means checkout would be on August 7.

Advocates for those affected by Hurricane Maria are calling on elected officials on the mainland and on the island to call for longer-term housing assistance. Krizia Lopez Arce with Organize Florida said working families have no home to return to. She said the families still in the hotels are there because the storm destroyed their homes.

Advocates are calling on FEMA to activate the Disaster Housing Assistance Program. FEMA has said its addressing rental housing needs through a similar, different program called "Direct Lease." That housing program is only available on the island.

A federal judge scheduled a hearing on the issue for August 1.

Congressmen Want More Spanish-speaking FEMA Workers In RGV

By Cristina Garcia

[McAllen \(TX\) Monitor](#), July 21, 2018

Rio Grande Valley congressmen asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Wednesday to send more Spanish-speaking workers to the area.

U.S. Reps. Filemon Vela, D-Brownsville, Vicente Gonzalez, D-McAllen, and Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, penned the letter to FEMA Administrator William B. Long requesting the agency "provide representatives that can speak Spanish."

The letter was sent in response to "a complaint from Texas state Senator Eddie Lucio Jr. regarding the lack of Spanish speaking FEMA representatives helping those affected by the floods with recovery assistance," according to a news release sent by Gonzalez's staff.

Currently, "every single person who is helping people speaks Spanish" in the disaster recovery centers, like the one recently opened in Weslaco, according to FEMA Public Information Officer Robin Smith.

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance crews conduct door-to-door visits in areas affected by last month's storms, which left parts of Hidalgo and Cameron counties flooded.

In the Las Milpas area of Pharr last week, at least two of the four representatives canvassing the area by foot spoke both English and Spanish. The crews also left flyers in both English and Spanish at homes where no one answered the door or were inaccessible.

Prior to sending FEMA crews to counties affected by a disaster, the agency verifies needs of the region through Census data as well as elected officials, according to Smith. In this case, Spanish speakers were sent to the Valley, including some who worked in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria and in Houston after Hurricane Harvey.

FEMA employs Spanish-speaking representatives who were sent from across the country to the Rio Grande Valley.

The agency also sent a bilingual media representative who communicates with predominantly Spanish-language television stations in the market.

In Hidalgo County, 85 percent of residents who are over 5 years old speak a language other than English at home, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

"It would be my hope that every resident seeking assistance is granted that opportunity, free of language barriers, to apply for such," Gonzalez said in a news release. "I call on Administrator Long and FEMA to do the right thing and hire more Spanish speaking FEMA representatives."

"No person should run the risk of being denied assistance due to language barriers," Vela added.

The congressmen also thanked Long for facilitating the disaster response in the region.

"Please know that by helping our communities rebuild and recover from all that was lost, you have impacted countless lives for the better," the letter read.

To apply for FEMA assistance by phone, call (800) 621-3362. For Spanish, callers are asked to select option "2" or say "espanol."

cgarcia@themonitor.comCorrection

This story was updated to reflect minor edits.

COAST GUARD

Ban Duck Boat Tours, Says Former NTSB Chairman After Fatal Branson Sinking

By Trevor Hughes

[USA Today](#), July 22, 2018

Amphibious duck tours like the one that killed 17 people in Branson, Missouri, last week should be banned, the former head of the National Transportation Safety Board said Sunday.

Former NTSB chairman Jim Hall, who served under President Bill Clinton, said the Thursday sinking on Table Rock Lake seemed eerily similar to a 1999 duck boat incident that killed 13 people in Arkansas. Hall said duck-boat tours are essentially unregulated amusement park rides, a criticism others have leveled because the amphibious vehicles don't fall neatly into being either a boat or a bus.

"My feeling after seeing this one is that the only thing to do in the name of public safety is to ban them," Hall told USA TODAY. "I think it's the responsible thing to do to ensure (riders) are not put at risk."

Following that 1999 fatal sinking in Arkansas, the NTSB recommended that duck-boat operators install additional flotation devices to ensure the low-riding vehicles would stay afloat even if their engines and bilge pumps stopped working.

Duck boats, based on World War II military landing craft known as DUKWs, are popular with tourists because they permit sightseeing on both land and water.

But the vehicles were never designed for extended use, and some duck-boat operators have significantly modified them to handle extra passengers and extend their operating seasons.

The Coast Guard announced Sunday that salvage crews will begin Monday to raise the Missouri duck boat that sank in Table Rock Lake, killing 17 of the 31 people aboard.

A crane from a southwest Missouri salvage operation, Fitzco Marine Group, has already been brought to a staging area, near the Showboat Branson Belle, according to photographs provided by the Coast Guard. A Fitzco representative declined to comment Sunday.

Divers are expected to swim down and connect the duck boat to a crane, which will then try to lift the boat from where it rests beneath 80 feet of water, according to a Coast Guard official.

The salvage operations were tentatively scheduled for 9 a.m. Monday and will be coordinated with Ride the Ducks, the company that operated the tour vehicle, before the vehicle is turned over to the NTSB, according to the Coast Guard.

Salvage operations were planned as relatives and friends continued to mourn the victims.

At a Sunday morning service at Zion Tabernacle Apostolic Church in Indianapolis, Suffragan Bishop Thomas E. Griffith announced that Tia Coleman was out of the hospital and heading home to Indianapolis after the Thursday tragedy.

Nine members of her family died in the accident, including her three children and her husband.

"We all have been touched by it and we're all struggling because we all love Tia," said Beverly Reese, a Zion Tabernacle member since 1985 who has known Tia Coleman since she was a little girl. "I had her through children's ministry. I was there when she graduated from high school. She is just a very, very sweet child, and we just want to tell her that we love her and we're praying like never before because we know this takes God and him only."

About 300 people attended a Sunday afternoon service at Williams Memorial Chapel at College of the Ozarks, where a bell chimed 17 times for the victims.

"Our lives were changed forever. Hearts were broken," Branson Mayor Karen Best said. "We honor the 14 survivors. And we honor the many heroes who did everything in their power to save lives."

The U.S. Coast Guard said the boat that sank was built in 1944 and has passed an inspection in February, the Kansas City Star reported. The company operating the Branson duck boats has halted service.

Divers have recovered a video recorder from the sunken duck boat that may provide clues to the disaster. The recorder will be analyzed at an NTSB lab in Washington, D.C., but it's still unclear whether the recorder was working at the time of the fatal capsizing or whether any of its data can be retrieved.

Keith Holloway, an NTSB spokesman, said it was also unclear whether the Branson duck boat's video-recording device had any audio capabilities. The device was recovered by divers, a team of which had been searching a cove on Table Rock Lake to locate the boat and the bodies of the deceased.

More: Sunken Branson duck boat had a video recorder. Officials have it, but not sure if it works

Investigators have also interviewed some of the survivors, Holloway said, as well as people on another duck boat that was on the lake at the same time but managed to avoid swamping and crashing.

Federal officials have warned tourists for nearly 20 years about the dangers posed by amphibious tour boats, which have spotty and sometimes contradictory safety regulations because they are neither entirely boat nor bus. Operators have lengthened some of the boats from their original designs and sometimes have added canopies and see-through vinyl "walls," allowing them to operate in bad weather.

In its analysis of the 1999 duck-boat sinking, the NTSB said the Coast Guard failed to adequately oversee the private operation, and that the owner failed to properly maintain a seal, allowing water to seep aboard the vehicle, the *Miss Majestic*.

"Contributing to the sinking was a flaw in the design of DUKWs as converted for passenger service, that is, the lack of adequate reserve buoyancy that would have allowed the vehicle to remain afloat in a flooded condition," the NTSB said. "Contributing to the high loss of life was a continuous canopy roof that entrapped passengers within the sinking vehicle."

More: Would wearing life jackets have made the deadly Branson duck boat accident even worse?

A witness's video of the Branson duck boat just before it capsized suggests that its flexible plastic windows might have been closed and could have trapped passengers as the hybrid boat-truck went down. It does not show passengers jumping clear.

"There are some things that stick out in your mind, and the thought of a canopy coming over a child that can't swim, without any type of life jacket on... is frightening," Hall said.

Citing the ongoing investigation, the company declined to comment and referred all inquiries to the NTSB. Its website now carries a statement of sorrow, along with the image of a black ribbon: "The safety of our

guests and employees is our number one priority. Ride the Ducks will be closed for business while we support the investigation, and to allow time to grieve for the families and the community. Thank you for your support, and we ask that your thoughts and prayers be with the families during this time."

Because the boats travel on land and in water, they are regulated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Coast Guard.

More: 'Death traps': Federal officials have warned about dangers from duck boats for two decades

The Coast Guard requires life jackets on boats but leaves it to the vessel's master to tell passengers when to wear the jackets during hazardous situations. The NTSB has recommended passengers not wear life jackets on boats that have canopies because when the vehicles sink, the life jackets can float passengers into the canopy, preventing escape.

The NTSB, which makes non-binding safety recommendations, has urged the removal of canopies from the vehicles to reduce the risk of drowning.

The agency has also recommended the highway administration regulate the vehicles for over-the-road travel with requirements for passenger seat belts, while saying that passengers shouldn't wear seat belts while the vehicle is in the water.

Multiple agencies are now investigating the Branson duck boat disaster.

More: Before accident in Branson, Missouri, duck boats had history of fatalities

Contributing: Will Schmitt, USA TODAY Network

Branson Duck Boat Salvage To Begin Monday At Table Rock Lake, Coast Guard Says

By Will Schmitt

[USA Today](#), July 22, 2018

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri — The Coast Guard has announced that efforts will begin Monday to salvage the duck boat that capsized on Table Rock Lake near Branson, Missouri, on Thursday, killing 17 people aboard. A crane from a southwest Missouri salvage operation has already been brought to a staging area near the site where the duck boat went down.

The boat sank Thursday evening as a thunderstorm brought near-hurricane-strength winds to Table Rock Lake. Search, rescue and recovery operations began shortly afterward and continued through Friday. By then, officials had determined that 17 of the 31 passengers on the duck boat perished, and divers had found the duck at the bottom of the lake.

The Coast Guard on Sunday said that salvage operations for the duck boat are tentatively scheduled for 9 a.m. Monday morning. The Coast Guard said it will oversee the salvage operations, which will be coordinated by the Ride the Ducks company.

"The salvage plan includes bringing Stretch Duck 7 to the surface, taking it to shore and transporting it to a secure facility for further inspection and investigation, where the National Transportation Safety Board will maintain custody of it," the Coast Guard said in a statement.

Divers are expected to swim down and connect the duck boat to a crane, which will then try to lift the boat from where it rests beneath 80 feet of water, according to a Coast Guard official.

Fitzco Marine Group of Shell Knob was called in to help with the salvage efforts, according to photographs provided by the Coast Guard. A Fitzco representative declined to comment Sunday other than saying the company was meeting with the Coast Guard and the Missouri State Highway Patrol when reached by the Springfield (Missouri) News-Leader.

Chris O'Neil, a spokesman for the National Transportation Safety Board, said the agency's fieldwork generally takes a week to 10 days, though that could be extended if there is difficulty recovering the sunken duck.

In addition to interviews, O'Neil said the board was gathering records about the duck's maintenance, operation, and previous Coast Guard inspections. The duck boats are inspected and certified by the Coast Guard, and any modifications to the vehicle require Coast Guard approval, according to O'Neil.

Part of the board's investigation will consider whether any damage to the duck occurred as a result of the crash or during the salvage process.

Federal officials hope a video recorder recovered from a sunken duck boat can provide information about the minutes leading up to the sinking. The device headed to a National Transportation Safety Board lab in Washington, D.C., but it's still unclear whether the recorder was working at the time of the fatal capsizing or whether any of its data can be retrieved.

Keith Holloway, another NTSB spokesman, said it was also unclear whether the Branson duck boat's video-recording device had any audio capabilities. The device was recovered by divers, a team of which had been searching a cove on Table Rock Lake to locate the boat and the bodies of the deceased.

Investigators have also interviewed some of the survivors, Holloway said, as well as people on another duck boat that was on the lake at the same time but managed to avoid swamping and crashing.

Holloway also said the board is asking for anyone who witnessed or recorded the sinking to contact federal officials at witness@ntsb.gov as investigators seek a more comprehensive understanding of what led to the duck boat's demise.

Trump, Pence Offer Condolences To Families Of Missouri Boat Tour Victims

By Jacqueline Thomsen

[The Hill](#), July 20, 2018

President Trump offered his condolences Friday after 17 people were killed when a tourist boat in Missouri sank.

Trump tweeted that his "deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those involved in the terrible boat accident" that happened late Thursday.

My deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those involved in the terrible boat accident which just took place in Missouri. Such a tragedy, such a great loss. May God be with you all!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 20, 2018

Vice President Pence also said that he and second lady Karen Pence "send our deepest sympathies and are praying for the victims' families and friends today."

Our hearts break for the tragic loss of life in Missouri today. Karen and I send our deepest sympathies and are praying for the victims' families and friends today. <https://t.co/DA7uW4Drxf>— Vice President Mike Pence (@VP) July 20, 2018

A tourist-carrying "duck boat," which can travel on both land and water, sank when a microburst storm hit Table Rock Lake by Branson, Mo., on Thursday. Fourteen people survived.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement that Trump and first lady Melania Trump "extend their deepest sympathies to all those affected" by the accident.

"We are thankful for the brave first responders and dive crews, whose quick and decisive actions have saved many lives, and we continue to pray for their safety as their search, rescue, and recovery operations continue," Sanders said.

Sanders added that the administration has been in touch with state and local officials, including Gov. Michael Parson (R), and that the president will receive regular updates on the situation.

Missouri Duck Boat Accident Kills 17, Including 9 From Same Family

By John Eligon, Timothy Williams And Mitch Smith

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

BRANSON, Mo. — As the duck boat made its everyday tour around Table Rock Lake, a popular, summertime tourist stop in southern Missouri, the skies grew dark and a fierce wind, more than 60 miles per hour, began battering it. Waves crashed against the boat's sides, as it rose and fell in a brutal chop. Then as stunned onlookers watched, some capturing video, the duck boat, carrying 31 people, suddenly slipped under.

Seventeen people were killed in the accident on Thursday evening, the authorities said on Friday, and seven others, including three children, were taken to hospitals. Officials have yet to release the names of the victims, but said that they range in age from 1 to 70. Nine of the dead came from one family, state officials said; two other members of the family who had been on the trip survived. It was one of the deadliest duck boat accidents in United States history.

Residents around Branson, a showy city that draws throngs of tourists to the Midwest every summer, said the storm had come up suddenly, only a short time after weather officials had issued warnings, and with a shocking ferocity.

"The wind picked up, they gave the storm warning," Michael Homan, a resident, said, "and then massive, straight line winds came out of nowhere."

The accident raised new concerns about the safety of duck boats, modeled after the amphibious trucks that the United States Army and Marine Corps used during World War II to carry troops and supplies between land and water, and about whether tourists should be passengers on them. After 13 people were killed when a duck boat sank in Hot Springs, Ark., in May 1999, the National Transportation Safety Board had called for sweeping changes to the way such tourist boats operate.

During the storm that swept through on Thursday evening, there were two duck boats on the lake, and both were returning to land at the time of the accident. "The first one made it out, and the second one didn't," Sheriff Doug Rader of Stone County said.

The boat that sank had life jackets, but the sheriff said he did not know if people were wearing them. Of the 31 people on the boat, 29 were passengers and two were crew members. The boat's captain, who had 16 years of experience on the lake, survived and was taken to a hospital, but the authorities said the other crew member, who was described as the driver, died.

Jim Pattison Jr., the president of Ripley Entertainment, which owns the boat, said the weather was calm when the boat left the dock on Thursday. "There were not any issues and they got out of the water and — and then it hit shortly thereafter," Mr. Pattison told CNN on Friday morning. "It was almost like a microburst."

The National Weather Service's office in Springfield, Mo., issued a severe thunderstorm warning at 6:32 p.m. for southern Missouri, including Table Rock Lake, about 35 minutes before the authorities received the first calls about the sinking of the boat.

Jeff Raberding, a meteorologist in the Springfield office, said that the storm entered the area with wind gusts up to 75 m.p.h., which were followed by heavy rain and lightning.

"We knew there was going to be the potential for severe weather and knew that in advance," Mr. Raberding said in an interview on Friday morning. "I wouldn't call it necessarily a microburst because microbursts are usually small. This was pretty widespread." Also on Thursday, tornadoes swept through Iowa, damaging a warehouse, homes and other structures.

The N.T.S.B. said it would dispatch a "go team" to Table Rock Lake to begin an investigation into the accident. The Coast Guard was also investigating.

Ripley Entertainment acquired the Ride the Ducks attraction in Branson last year. Mr. Pattison, the company president, said this was the first such accident at Ride the Ducks, which was started more than 40 years ago.

"People are supposed to be able to go out for an outing and have a good time," he said. "We shouldn't be out there in severe weather. We are absolutely devastated."

The duck boats are modeled after DUKWs, which brought materials ashore during the invasion of Normandy and hauled howitzers during the landings in Iwo Jima. In the decades since, duck vehicles have been used to transport tourists in places like Philadelphia, the Wisconsin Dells and Branson. In duck boats, passengers sit close to the surface, which critics have said make them more dangerous than a typical boat.

Before Thursday's accident, the deadliest event involving a duck boat was the 1999 accident in Arkansas, when the Miss Majestic sank to the bottom of Lake Hamilton. The N.T.S.B. cited inadequate maintenance as the cause and ordered duck boat operators nationwide, including the company in Branson, to outfit their vessels with additional flotation devices to help prevent sinking.

The victims on the Miss Majestic drowned after they became trapped beneath the boat's heavy canopy as the vessel took on water and eventually sank in 60 feet of water, the N.T.S.B. found.

The N.T.S.B. investigation found that the United States Coast Guard had failed to follow its own rules regulating the vessels. The agency's report said that the Coast Guard had generally displayed a "lack of

adequate oversight” and that its inspection of the vessel had been “inadequate and cursory.”

The likely reason for that sinking, according to the N.T.S.B., was that the vessel's owner, Land and Lakes Tours, had failed to maintain the boat.

The safety board also found that duck boats converted for passenger service lacked adequate buoyancy to stay afloat once they began to flood.

It issued a stern warning to operators of duck boats to fix the problem: “Without delay, alter your amphibious passenger vessels to provide reserve buoyance through passive means, such as watertight compartmentalization, built-in flotation, or equivalent measures, so that they will remain afloat and upright in the event of flooding, even when carrying a full complement of passengers and crew.”

It is not clear whether duck boat operators complied, and the Coast Guard, which regulates duck boats, did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment Friday.

In Branson, 70-minute rides take visitors past notable sights along city streets before plunging into Table Rock Lake. The rides are popular with children, who receive yellow duck whistles that make a quacking noise, and have long been a fixture of Branson itineraries, along with the Dolly Parton's Stampede dinner show and roller coasters at the Silver Dollar City amusement park.

The boats in Branson were modeled after the military vehicles but built specifically as tour boats. According to an archived version of the tour company's website, the boats include “modern safety equipment” and “patented safety features that no other DUKW-style vehicle has.”

“So, relax and enjoy this unique experience,” the website said.

John Eligon reported from Branson, Mo., and Timothy Williams and Mitch Smith from Chicago. Karen Zraick, Jacey Fortin, Julia Jacobs, Matthew Haag, Susan C. Beachy, Gabe Cohn and Matt Stevens contributed reporting from New York.

17 People Killed When Duck Boat Sinks During Storm In Missouri, Police Say

By Reece Ristau, Mark Berman, Allyson Chiu And Emily Wax-Thibodeaux

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

BRANSON, MO. — It had been a nice summer day here in the Ozarks, and the duck boat filled with sightseers was coasting through a calm Table Rock Lake. Then the wind began to pick up and the water

started to churn as a powerful thunderstorm crashed through.

Punishing rain pummeled the amphibious boat, waves tossed it like a toy, its canopy fluttering in 65 mph gusts, its bow thrusting through whitecaps. As it struggled toward its dock to take 29 passengers and a two-member crew to safety, it was overwhelmed. Gripping video footage from the lake showed the boat seesawing and lurching in unrelenting waves. Before long, the small, flat-bottomed, half-boat half-bus capsized and sank, plunging to the bottom of the lake, killing more than half of the people aboard.

By the end of the day Friday, authorities had recovered the bodies of 17, a list of victims that crossed generations, ranging from 1 to 70 years old, many of whom were out-of-state visitors — including nine members of a single family. Authorities said the captain survived while the boat's driver was killed. Branson Mayor Karen Best identified the driver as Robert “Bob” Williams, of Branson.

The boat had been on a regular tour around a lake near this popular resort town in southwest Missouri, and some authorities and experts said Friday that it is unclear why operators did not heed forecasts and warnings that the storm was on its way. The National Weather Service issued a severe-thunderstorm warning at 6:32 p.m., more than a half-hour before police were called about the boat's capsizing.

Marshall Shepherd, a past president of the American Meteorological Society, and professor at the University of Georgia, tweeted that the “tragedy was completely preventable.”

“This is not 1901,” he wrote. “We have satellites, advanced radars, good weather models, all short-term weather information showed that storms approaching well before the boat was on the water.”

Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader told reporters that he believed the boat — which he said was one of two duck boats still operating on the lake during the storm — sank because of the weather. When asked Friday whether he thought operator or design error played a role in the tragedy, Rader declined to answer. The second boat made it back to the dock safely.

Jim Pattison Jr., president of Ripley Entertainment, which owns the boat operation, said Friday that what appeared to be “a fast-moving storm” hit an otherwise placid lake. He said that some of the company's other boats had been in the water earlier in the day. But he acknowledged that the boat should not have been out.

“It shouldn't have been in the water if what happened happened,” Pattison told “CBS This Morning” in an interview Friday. “It is absolutely devastating.”

Authorities said they expected to recover the sunken boat late Friday from its resting place in 80 feet of water. Rader said the boat had landed in about 40 feet of water before rolling down to a deeper point and ending up on its wheels. Authorities expect to recover the boat later Friday.

"It's going to take time to know the details of everything that occurred," Gov. Mike Parson (R) said at a news briefing Friday, noting that the sprawling investigation had just begun. "Until that investigation is completed, I don't think it's my place or anyone's place to speculate all the things that could have happened or why they happened."

The duck boat that sank on Thursday was owned by Ride the Ducks Branson, a tourism company that takes people on tours of the Ozarks by land and water using the amphibious vehicles. Ride the Ducks is a national duck tour operator with locations across the United States, and the Branson operation was purchased last year by Ripley Entertainment, said Suzanne Smagala-Potts, a spokeswoman for Ripley.

Smagala-Potts said the boat tragedy is the first accident involving the duck boats in Branson. The company has been operating in the city for 40 years and is "a staple of Branson," Smagala-Potts said.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic accident that occurred this evening at Ride the Ducks Branson," she said. "This incident has deeply affected all of us. We will continue to do all we can to assist the families who were involved."

Federal investigators also headed to the scene to join state and local officials, with the National Transportation Safety Board dispatching a "Go Team" to the lake to help probe the latest disaster involving duck boats, which are popular with tourists across the country.

Duck boat tours, which can be found in cities from Washington to Seattle, have suffered several fatal accidents, in water and on land. Thirteen people died in 1999 after a duck boat took on water and sank while on a tour of Lake Hamilton in Hot Springs, Ark.

In 2015, a Ride the Ducks boat crashed into a charter bus on the Aurora Bridge in Seattle; five college students were killed and dozens of people injured. Ride the Ducks International agreed the following year to pay \$1 million for violating federal safety regulations, according to the Seattle Times.

Two passengers on a duck boat were killed in 2010 near Philadelphia when a barge collided with the smaller vessel. The NTSB later determined that the accident — which also caused the duck boat to sink — occurred because the person guiding the larger ship was focused on his cellphone, though federal investigators

also criticized the duck boat's operator, Ride the Ducks, for actions they said contributed to the accident.

The duck boats in Branson are a popular feature with tourists and locals alike, according to Best, the mayor, who noted that the U.S. Coast Guard, not the city of Branson, is in charge of oversight and regulation of the boats. She said she could not recall previous issues with the two companies that have operated the boats in the 16 years she has lived in Branson.

"The duck boats are such a great asset to our community," she said. "As a local, I've ridden in them I can't tell you how many times."

Branson is a destination for country and live-music fans, with many acts covering Elvis, Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton standards. Its main boulevard includes Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede Dinner Attraction, and Silver Dollar City, an 1800s-themed amusement park.

As rescue teams were in the water late Thursday night, Best and her staff prepared the Branson City Hall as a refuge for those waiting to hear about their loved ones. The city brought in certified grief counselors and food for the handful of families who chose to go to the downtown brick building.

"We opened up City Hall so the families could come, and they could congregate here, and they could feel comfortable and we could love on them, hug on them, cry with them, whatever it was they needed," Best said.

She witnessed one of the grief counselors take wet socks from a young man and dry them with the bathroom hand drier. "That was such a small thing, but for that young man having dry socks was such an improvement from being cold and wet," she said. "Little things like that meant a lot to the families."

Best, who's in her second term in office, said the city has about 10,000 residents and welcomes more than 8 million visitors yearly. July and November are its busiest months.

"We're a very resilient community and we bounce back and we take care of each other, whether we know you or whether we don't know you," she said.

Parson also ordered flags in the state to be flown at half-staff for a week.

Nine members of the same family were among the 17 people who died when the duck boat capsized, a spokesperson from Parson's office confirmed Friday. Two other members of the family survived. Seven other passengers were injured, and two of them were in serious condition.

Aside from Williams, the boat driver, the names and ages of the victims had not been released as of Friday afternoon; many had been visitors from out of town. Williams, who lived in Branson with his wife of 30

years, was described as loving his role promoting Branson.

"Every time you saw him he was smiling," said Best, who knew Williams well. "He was a great guy. He loved Branson. . . . He will be sorely missed."

Victor Richardson, Williams' grandson, said in a telephone interview that "he was the calmest spirit you could ever meet. We are just taking time to be with our family."

Police were first called about the duck boat sinking shortly after 7 p.m. Thursday, officials said. While dive teams headed to the scene, people already there began to help, Rader said, a group that included one of his deputies, who was off-duty and performing security on the Branson Belle, a showboat that offers tours of the lake.

That deputy helped with the rescue, while employees of the Belle jumped in to help along with some of that ship's passengers, Rader said. He described the effort as "outstanding."

The weather had been nice until shortly before the disaster, Allison Lester, who saw what happened from a nearby boat, said in another television interview.

"The wind really picked up bad, and debris was flying everywhere, and just the waves were really rough," Lester told "Good Morning America" in an interview Friday. "It was just suddenly and out of nowhere."

In video captured by onlookers from the lake, two duck boats can be seen churning up and down through choppy waves and high spray. One of the boats lags behind the other, nose-diving into the water. A speedboat can be seen driving up behind the duck boats.

"Oh my gosh, oh no," a woman is heard saying in the background of the video. "Somebody needs to help them."

"That duck, I don't know if they're going to make it back," a man is also heard saying in the video.

Another video was captured by a passenger inside the other duck boat, which made it safely to shore. Footage from Paul Lemus published by local news outlets shows a number of adults and children inside the boat. Waves crash up against the windows, and the Branson Belle can be seen docked nearby, on the lake's shore by Table Rock State Park. According to police, the call about the duck boat sinking described it as near the Belle.

Video from a second 'Ride The Ducks' boat that made it safely back to shore. It was on the water at Table Rock Lake at the same time as the boat that capsized. (Credit: Paul Lemus) pic.twitter.com/AKQmWfdoal— Jason Boatright (@TheJasonBoat) July 20, 2018

The storm rolled in suddenly while Rachel Zerby was camping along the lake near where the duck boat capsized, she said.

"We have a clear line of sight to both across the water," Zerby said. "I noticed most of the boats had left the water, but there were still at least two or maybe three ducks still near the Belle."

Crazy storm... 17 fatalities on Table Rock Lake. [Lakesideresort.com](https://lakesideresort.com) #tablerock #lovetablerock #tablerocklake #branson Posted by Lakeside Resort & Restaurant on Table Rock Lake on Thursday, July 19, 2018

Roger Brallier, who is a duck boat captain for Ride the Ducks Branson, said that all of the captains are "very close."

"Were it not for grace of God, it could've been me on the boat," he said. "All of our hearts are completely broken right now."

My deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those involved in the terrible boat accident which just took place in Missouri. Such a tragedy, such a great loss. May God be with you all!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 20, 2018

Berman, Chiu and Wax reported from Washington. Julie Tate, Jason Samenow and Samantha Schmidt in Washington contributed to this report, which has been updated.

Family Is Devastated As Nine Relatives Are Among 17 People Killed In Missouri Duck Boat Accident

Fourteen survived after tourist boat sank on Table Rock Lake

By Joe Barrett

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Duck Boat Design Flagged Years Ago After Fatal Accident In Arkansas

By Tea Kvetenadze And Barbara Goldbergby

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

CYBER NEWS

Mapping Spies Through Fitness Trackers And Phones: Privacy Is Dead Even For Those In The Shadows

By Kalev Leetaru
[Forbes](#), July 21, 2018

This past January a university student discovered that a global public fitness tracker map could be used to discern highly sensitive security information about the locations and movements of military, intelligence and other government personnel near highly security sensitive facilities. The source? The fitness trackers that have exploded in popularity and that many militaries actually even encourage their soldiers to wear, inadvertently broadcasting their classified locations and patterns of life to the public. Diving deeper, that same map and others like it can be used to retrieve the actual real-world names of individuals that can be tied back to their LinkedIn and Facebook accounts and even used to identify their home address by looking at where their jogging runs begin and end. Once again we are reminded that privacy is dead, even for those who live in the shadows.

When the first press coverage emerged this past January about how fitness tracking maps could be used to identify sensitive patterns of life around security installations like nuclear weapons facilities, forward military bases and the like, one of the key questions raised was just how the military and intelligence agencies could have let this happen.

Perhaps the more interesting story is that in the January case, the map itself had actually been publicly available for more than two months without any concerns until someone from a different discipline, an international security studies student, stumbled upon it and saw it from a different angle. This is a critical reminder of why companies must stop seeing the world through the narrow lens of technology and instead bring together those from other disciplines to help them understand how their data and technologies might be used for nefarious purposes. After all, if Facebook had just listened five years ago to the experts warning that it would be used for state-sponsored misinformation campaigns that could even impact elections, instead of blindly believing that technology would save the day, perhaps we would never have seen 2016's Russian campaign.

It is also a reminder that seemingly innocent and innocuous data, like displaying aggregate fitness runs at population scale, can still reveal immensely sensitive and dangerous information.

Indeed, it is remarkable how many rooms I've sat in with some of our country's supposedly best and brightest technical advisers on data security, only to bring the entire room to a standstill when I interject with the most basic of ways the proposed dataset or analytic system could be misused. Technologists can come up

with truly brilliant and bleeding edge technological solutions, but they are rarely able to see beyond the code to understand how it might be misused or endanger its users.

As researchers have begun to dig into other fitness tracking maps, they've discovered a broad trend in the ability to uncover extraordinarily sensitive patterns of life and even tie individual routes back to the real life identities of those runners, their current state of health and even their home address and photos and details of their children. In our connected online world, all it takes is a few details to pull up someone's entire professional history through LinkedIn and their personal life through Facebook and Twitter, etc.

The discovery of how easy it is to harvest this information raises the question of whether this past January's public disclosure was the first time anyone on earth had thought of using fitness data for intelligence tracking or whether perhaps this was already a popular and easy source of data used by adversarial governments to track the intelligence and military forces of the world in realtime.

After all, Verizon did not apparently place any restrictions on who could purchase the realtime location information of its customers, meaning it could easily have been used as a spy tracking service, making it surprising indeed that the intelligence community did not take steps to mitigate its impact for its personnel or the ability of foreign adversaries to use those commercial tracking services against it.

Perhaps the bigger story is the lack of imagination among the world's governments that enabled a world in which their personnel in security sensitive positions were permitted to live broadcast their locations to private companies in the first place. How many military commanders or counterintelligence officers sat down and inventoried all of the personal electronic devices their personnel were using in the field today and carefully thought through every possible misuse of those devices by foreign intelligence services?

How many of the devices soldiers and intelligence personnel take with them in their personal lives have GPS trackers, microphones, cellular connections, remotely updateable firmware and other vectors that could be used to compromise those devices and turn them into bugging devices or simply give away critical information during the individual's daily life even if functioning correctly?

The failure of imagination by the military and intelligence communities that allowed fitness trackers to proliferate to such a degree in situations where they give away critical daily life patterns is both remarkable and inexcusable. Government personnel in sensitive security

positions are only human after all, but if those individuals can endure the hardship of being away from their phones during the day in a SCIF, they can learn not to use their fitness trackers in the immediate vicinity of their workplaces.

It is remarkable that the US Government, for all its cyber prowess, has apparently been focused far too narrowly on offense, rather than defense. For all the US intelligence community's efforts on digital modernization and all its public statements about its wealth of research into how the digital world is reshaping and impacting tradecraft, it seems no-one actually sat down to think about whether it was a good idea to have its personnel live streaming public blueprints of the pattern of life of their most sensitive and classified facilities and making it so easy to track down the actual individuals behind each fitness track.

Putting this all together, perhaps the biggest story here revolves around the duality of Silicon Valley needing to bring in experts outside the technology world to help it think in new and creative ways about how its data and tools can be misused, while the governments of the world need to bring in outside experts to help them think about how their inadvertent data exhaust can bring with it a wealth of unintended consequences. In short, as many of these stories go, we have a failure of imagination.

Singapore's Prime Minister Among 1.5 Million Affected By Cyberattack

By Hannah Beech

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

A cyberattack on Singapore's public health system has compromised data from 1.5 million people, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, a cancer survivor, the authorities announced on Friday.

"This was a deliberate, targeted and well-planned cyberattack," Singapore's Health Ministry and Ministry of Communications and Information said in a statement. "It was not the work of casual hackers or criminal gangs."

Singaporeans who visited certain outpatient clinics between May 1, 2015, and July 4, 2018, may have been affected. The target of the attack was SingHealth, which runs four public hospitals and other facilities.

The data purloined includes basic personal information: names, addresses, gender, race and birth dates. In addition, information about what drugs were dispensed in outpatient clinics to 160,000 people was exposed and copied during the hack.

No other medical records were taken, nor was information tampered with, the health ministry said

The government has set up an online service so that people can check if their personal information was compromised.

"We have lodged a police report on the incident," the ministry said. "We apologize for the anxiety caused."

A highly wired city-state that claims to have the highest mobile phone penetration rate in the world, Singapore is on the forefront of efforts to integrate technology into daily life.

A new housing development is being used as a testing ground for driverless vehicles, while Singapore residents can use their cellphones to pay parking fees or check where cases of dengue, a tropical disease, have broken out.

Singapore's Smart Nation government website says people can use their smartphones to access "personalized health records at your fingertips!"

The hack appeared to have used malware to infiltrate the system.

The government said the hackers, who have not been named, had "specifically and repeatedly targeted" the data about Mr. Lee, Singapore's prime minister, including the medicines he had been dispensed on an outpatient basis.

In 2013, Mr. Lee's website was targeted by hackers who said they were part of the hacking collective Anonymous.

"I don't know what the attackers were hoping to find," Mr. Lee wrote in a Facebook post on Friday, of the health breach. "Perhaps they were hunting for some dark state secret, or at least something to embarrass me."

"If so they would have been disappointed," he added. "My medication data is not something I would ordinarily tell people about, but there is nothing alarming in it."

Singapore Health Database Hit By Cyberattack

Hackers steal more than 1.5 million health records, including that of the Singapore leader

By Jake Maxwell Watts And Saurabh Chaturvedi

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Mueller Finally Solves Mysteries About Russia's 'Fancy Bear' Hackers

By Kevin Poulsen

[Daily Beast](#), July 20, 2018

When Robert Mueller's grand jury handed down an indictment against 12 Russian intelligence officers last

week, one name in the 29-page document was instantly familiar to security experts who've been on the trail of one of the Internet's most notorious hacker groups.

Known variously as Fancy Bear, Sofacy, Pawn Storm, Strontium, Tsar Team, Sednit, and APT28, the Russian hackers that did the intrusions for the Kremlin's election interference campaign have been active for 12 years, breaching NATO, Obama's White House, a French television station, the World Anti-Doping Agency and countless NGOs, and militaries and civilian agencies in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

For nearly as long, security researchers have been hot on Fancy Bear's tracks. Without Mueller's access to spy agency intel, the researchers know the hackers by their fruits —the methods they use, the maze of covert servers undergirding their campaigns, and, most of all, their code. Where some other state-sponsored attackers prefer off-the-shelf malware, Fancy Bear is known for mostly staying in-house, developing and continuously improving dozens of purpose-built tools. Whenever one of those programs gets captured in the wild, researchers pick it apart for new insights into the Fancy Bear's methods.

The code has yielded more than a few tantalizing artifacts over the years, perhaps none more so than a string found in its most famous malware, called X-Agent.

X-Agent was used in the 2016 DNC hack, but its history stretches back years before. It comes out at the tail end of what the security world calls the "cyber kill-chain." After the hackers have reconnoitered a target, squirmed their way onto a computer and made the decision that the machine is worth keeping, the final step is to install persistent malware that will let them monitor and control the computer indefinitely.

"I was surprised... It's been like playing chess against someone and never knowing who the opponent is."

— Kaspersky Labs' Kurt Baumgartner

Fancy Bear has two primary long-term backdoors. One, called EvilToss, was built for flexibility, with a mechanism for loading malware plug-ins on the fly. The other is known, both to the Russians and their trackers, as X-Agent.

X-Agent is a reliable workhorse, time tested and proven, and packing all the basic features a cyber spy needs. Among other things it can steal passwords, watch keystrokes and capture images of the infected computer's screen. Originally written for Windows, Fancy Bear has since ported the malware to Linux, OS-X, IOS and Android.

Most of the time the code is stripped before deployment, shorn of the kind of information that would lend insight into its origin. But frequently enough

something slips through, including the recurring nickname of the code's author: "kazak."

Variable names and comments in X-Agent suggested Kazak had fluency in English and Russian, and wasn't averse to casually salty language (one comment found by the European security firm ESET read, "TODO: Remove fucking defines!!!"). But not much else could be deduced about him from the code.

And so it was with some interest that security experts read the charges against one of the GRU officers named in the latest indictment: Lt. Cap. Nikolay Yuryevich Kozachek, who allegedly "developed, customized, and monitored X-Agent malware used to hack the DCCC and DNC networks."

Kozachek, the indictment reads, "used a variety of monikers, including 'kazak.'"

"I was surprised," says Kurt Baumgartner, principal security researcher at Kaspersky Labs' global research team. "It's been like playing chess against someone and never knowing who the opponent is."

If Lt. Cap. Yuryevich is indeed "Kazak," he occupies a key role in Fancy Bear's coding shop, says Baumgartner. "X-Agent is something that Kazak has been working on for years. And wherever [Fancy Bear] shows up on a high-profile target, they pull out Kazak's code."

Fancy Bear's other persistence engine, EvilToss, has also enjoyed ongoing development, but was never ported to the array of non-Windows operating systems that X-Agent now supports. If there were intra-office politics at play, Baumgartner says, Yuryevich clearly came out on top.

The indictment also indirectly settles a controversy related to a different election interference operation, the so-called "Macron Leaks" that went viral in the final hours 2017 French presidential race.

Macron Leaks had eerie similarities to Russia's 2016 U.S. interference. Most of the material came from the hacked Gmail accounts of people connected to Emmanuel Macron's campaign, and they were promoted breathlessly on social media by the usual line up of Pizzagaters and Twitter bots.

Macron, of course, won anyway, and afterwards the French government said it could find no evidence that Russia was behind the hacks. "It really could be anyone," a French cyber security official said at the time. "It could even be an isolated individual."

Internet sleuths, though, spotted a tell in the document dump. The metadata in nine Excel spreadsheets in the leak indicated they'd been modified weeks earlier by someone named "Рoшкa Гeopгий Пeтpoвич," or "Georgy Petrovich Roshka" in English.

Google searches showed Roshka had worked for a government contractor in Moscow in 2014. But the independent Russian news outlet The Insider found more recent information in the participants list for a 2016 conference attended by Roska. There, Roska listed his title as: "Military unit No. 26165, specialist," with no further explanation. (Roska didn't respond to repeated email inquiries from The Daily Beast).

Thanks to the new indictment, we now know exactly what Unit 26165 is. Mueller identifies it as the GRU unit that handled the hacking aspects of the Kremlin's election interference. In other words, it's Fancy Bear. The head of Unit 26165 at the time, Viktor Borisovich Netyksho, is the lead defendant in the case.

DHS Cyber Chief Says The Election System 'Works,' Is Resilient To Tampering – FCW

By Lauren C. Williams

[Federal Computer Week](#), July 20, 2018

The U.S. election system may be under attack, but Christopher Krebs argues that democracy's defenses are resilient.

Krebs, the Department of Homeland Security's undersecretary for the National Protection and Programs Directorate, stressed during a July 20 Washington Post cyber event that individuals' voting rights were safe despite persistent cybersecurity threats to election infrastructure.

"The way the system by law – not just the technical system but the broader election system is constructed – is that if you, anyone in this room or watching online, shows up to vote and something is wrong with your registration, either you're not in the system or you're clearly not a woman and this says you are, you have the right by law to request a provisional ballot," he said.

"It can take a little bit of time, it can be disruptive on election day and can cause a little bit of concern, but this happens already without Russians getting involved."

The 2018 midterm elections do remain a target. Krebs told senators during a July 11 hearing of the House Homeland Security Committee that while the elections remain a potential target for Russian disinformation campaigns, there's no evidence that activity has reached 2016 levels.

"What we're saying is we haven't seen a campaign on the scale of 2016 of concerted attacks against the election infrastructure, concerted attacks against these campaigns," Krebs said – the latter point referring to a senior Microsoft executive's July 19 assertion that three 2018 candidates' campaigns were being targeted by phishing campaigns similar to those seen in 2016.

(Krebs said DHS and the FBI are working with Microsoft to share information and "shore up defenses.")

The biggest issue, Krebs said, is lack of cooperation between the private sector and state and federal governments, which has prompted development of a new risk management initiative.

DHS is preparing to launch an initiative that will have "integrated cross sector government-industry collaboration in the cybersecurity, critical infrastructure protection space," and include the Treasury and Energy Departments as well as other sector-specific agencies, he said. Together they will create "a coordination capability" that combines and supports cybersecurity and industrial control system expertise.

"No company out there, no state out there is going to work on this challenge by themselves, we have to work together," Krebs said. "We're pushing a collective security model where we work together to manage risk."

Former GOP House Intelligence Chair: 'Advantage Putin'

By Bastien Inzaurrealde

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

Mike Rogers, a GOP former House Intelligence Committee chairman, said the events of the past week amounted to "advantage Putin."

Rogers (Mich.) said that it was "very, very concerning" that President Trump decided to meet one-on-one with Russian President Vladimir Putin this week in Helsinki, saying such a move allowed Putin to portray the meeting in a favorable light to him.

Rogers added that Trump seemed unprepared for the Helsinki summit — and that he was a "little rude" in his approach to European countries at a NATO summit beforehand. Rogers also said he thinks Trump should not hold another summit in Washington this fall. "Anything related to this topic is causing problems in unleashing the entire of the U.S. government to help us deal with this problem," Rogers said.

"America is in a cyberwar, most Americans don't know it, and I am not convinced we're winning," he said.

Chris Painter, who served as State Department coordinator for cyber issues in the Obama administration, acknowledged that U.S. authorities have enacted punitive measures against Russia, but "we really haven't done something that really hits" Putin directly. Painter added that any measures the U.S. government may take are "substantially undercut" if there is no consistent messaging from top officials, including Trump. If you're Putin, Painter asked, "is that going to sway you from doing this in the future?" Additionally, Painter said he disagrees with the idea that

Russian efforts to sow discord in the 2016 campaign had no effect on the outcome of the election. "It's unfair to say it had no effect," he said. "We don't know." He also lamented the Trump administration's decision to terminate the White House cybersecurity coordinator position.

Top intelligence officials also speaking at The Washington Post's Cyber 202 Live event reinforced the intelligence community's assessment that Russia is the most dangerous actor in cyberspace.

A top cybersecurity official for the director of national intelligence said Friday there is "good reason" the intelligence community is warning that the threats of Russian cyberattacks are "blinking red" ahead of the 2018 midterms.

"With regards to Russia, I agree with the DNI and others' characterization that they are the most aggressive foreign actor that we see in cyberspace," said Tonya Ugoretz, who serves as director of Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

"It wasn't just aimed at the government, it was aimed at all of us," Ugoretz said of the warning that Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats issued last week about Russian cyberthreats to the United States ahead of this year's midterm elections.

Speaking on the same panel, Jason Matheny, director of Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity at the ODNI, said one way to counter foreign influence operations online is for social media users to approach the content they encounter with more "skepticism."

"In general, as citizens, we need to be more skeptical about information that we see on social media," Matheny said. "So the same advice that you are probably giving to your kids about just treating any information that they see on their social media accounts with some degree of cynicism, we as a general citizenry also need to have that same level of skepticism."

Christopher C. Krebs, a Department of Homeland Security official in charge of helping states secure their election systems, praised the level of "engagement" of stakeholders in working to improve election security. "What I've seen in the last year ... I have never seen a level of engagement so rapidly and so deeply across any infrastructure sector like I have with elections," said Krebs, who serves as undersecretary of DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate.

The comments came after Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein on Thursday announced a new policy aiming to counter foreign influence operations and capped a week-long controversy surrounding Trump's stance on Russian interference in the past U.S.

presidential election. The intelligence community — including Coats and FBI Director Christopher A. Wray — stood by U.S. intelligence agencies' assessment throughout the week and thus rebuked Trump's comments on the matter during his news conference Monday in Helsinki with Putin, which the U.S. president later walked back.

"My people came to me, Dan Coats came to me and some others, they said they think it's Russia," Trump said in Finland as he stood beside Putin. "I have President Putin — he just said it's not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be."

Trump sought to amend his remarks Tuesday and said he was siding with U.S. intelligence agencies in their conclusions that Russia aimed to sow discord in the 2016 presidential campaign. But the president added a caveat: "Could be other people also. A lot of people out there."

On Wednesday morning, Trump seemed to suggest that Russia was no longer targeting the United States — the White House later said the president had been misunderstood. Later that day, CBS News released an interview in which Trump said it is "true" that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election.

Coats said Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado that he "wished [Trump] had made a different statement" in Finland. He also said he was "just doing my job" when he issued a statement that endorsed the intelligence community's conclusions on Russian interference. Coats said that "it was important to take that stand on behalf of the intelligence community, on behalf of the American people" and that he "needed to correct the record."

On Wednesday, Wray said at the Aspen conference that Russian authorities are still trying to instill "discord and divisiveness" in American politics. "We haven't yet seen an effort to target specific election infrastructure this time, but certainly other efforts — what I would call malign influence operations — are very active and we could be just a moment away from it going to the next level," Wray said. "So, to me, it's a threat that we need to take extremely seriously and respond to with, you know, fierce determination and focus."

Trump Administration Plans National Cyber Risk Management Initiative

By Joseph Marks

[NextGov](#), July 20, 2018

The Trump administration is developing a national risk management initiative aimed at tightening communication lines between government and industry

about major cyber vulnerabilities, a top Homeland Security Department official said Friday.

The effort will link Homeland Security and the Energy and Treasury departments with companies in their sectors as well as smaller agencies that regulate or interact with specific sectors that face cyber threats, said Chris Krebs, undersecretary of Homeland Security's cybersecurity and infrastructure protection division.

"It's not just about government working together, it's about industry and government working together," Krebs said during a cyber event hosted by The Washington Post. "We have to have integrated, cross-sector government-industry collaboration in the cybersecurity space and in the critical infrastructure protection space and that's where we're going."

A Homeland Security spokesman declined to provide additional details about the initiative or a timeline.

Homeland Security has increasingly framed its approach to cybersecurity as a "risk management" effort in recent years. That roughly translates to figuring out which computer systems are most vulnerable to hacking or most attractive to nation-state and criminal hacking groups and concentrating mitigation efforts on those systems rather than protecting all systems equally.

States Should Be More Specific

Krebs also responded during the Post event to a Thursday vote in which House Republicans voted down Democratic efforts to double the \$380 million the federal government already allocated to improving state and local election security.

Krebs acknowledged some states may need additional money—especially states that need to replace a large number of vulnerable electronic voting machines—but faulted states for not being specific enough about how much money they need and how they will use it.

"What I think we need to do in the very near future is, rather than just say 'we need money, give us money' is: 'We need X amount of money to address X threat and buy down X amount of risk.' We have to be much more precise," he said.

The Name Change Again

Krebs also stumped Friday for a stalled bill that would rename the agency he leads from the National Protection and Programs Directorate, or NPPD, to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA.

The agency's current clunky acronym has made it difficult for Krebs to reach out effectively to the private sector and impeded some of his early work with state and local election officials because people outside government can't easily understand what the agency does, he said.

"NPPD, it sounds a Soviet-era intelligence agency," Krebs said. "It doesn't tell anybody what we do."

Wolf Starts State Government Work Group On Election Security

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania's governor is bringing together government agencies to help ensure the state's elections are safe and secure.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf announced Friday he was setting up the Inter-Agency Election Preparedness and Security Workgroup, led by his cabinet member who heads the agency that oversees voting.

The chairmen are acting Secretary of State Robert Torres and John MacMillan, the Office of Administration's chief information officer.

The group also includes the Military and Veterans Affairs Department, as well as the offices of the governor, homeland security and inspector general. Other members are the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and the state police.

They'll focus on training and preparation at all levels of election administration, planning for different possible problems and collecting public input on the topic of election security.

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As Election Nears And Feds Warn Of Cyber Threats, Wisconsin Election-security Posts Sit Vacant

[Wisconsin State Journal](#), July 21, 2018

Six new state positions to help secure Wisconsin elections from cyber threats remain vacant months after being created, and members of the Elections Commission say Gov. Scott Walker's administration has been the holdup to filling the jobs.

It's now clear the positions won't be filled before the Aug. 14 primary election. At least one commissioner and a Democratic state legislative leader say it's critical that the roles are filled by the November midterms.

National security officials have warned that malicious cyber actors, including those tied to the Russian government, this year may reprise or intensify their attacks on U.S. election systems.

The bipartisan state Elections Commission voted in April to create and fill the six staff positions, in addition to its existing 25.75 positions, as part of preparing for the 2018 elections. All six jobs have some election-security duties and three are focused on it: two are in elections IT

and one provides security training to local election workers.

In May, the commission gave Walker's Department of Administration information about the positions so it could fill them. The department handles human resources functions, including hiring, for agencies across state government.

So far, the hiring hasn't happened. Mark Thomsen, a Democrat on the commission, said there's urgency to fill the positions; he hoped that would be done by the Aug. 14 primary election and well ahead of the Nov. 6 general election.

Commission chairman Dean Knudson, a former Republican state lawmaker, also said the ball is in the DOA's court.

"We want (the new positions) filled as soon as possible," Knudson said. "When you're creating a new position, it never happens as fast as you'd like."

Department of Administration spokesman John Dipko said in a statement Friday that the department experienced some staff turnover in June but now is working "expeditiously" to fill the elections positions. Dipko said the department expects to post at least two of them next week.

"We expect the positions to be filled well in advance of the November general election, which we've understood was the intended vision" for them, Dipko said.

Elections commission spokesman Reid Magney said the agency is confident it can secure elections with its existing staff. But if the new positions stay unfilled, other tasks that are lower priority may be delayed, Magney said.

"The Wisconsin Elections Commission is fully capable of running a secure election on Aug. 14 with our current staff," Magney said. "We had hoped to have new staff on board before the partisan primary so they would have the benefit of experiencing an election day before the general election in November, but that is not essential."

Thomsen said the recent indictments by U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller lend more urgency to the state's election-security efforts. The indictments charge Russian intelligence officers with cyber attacks aimed to influence the 2016 U.S. elections, including successful hacking of a state board of elections — the state is not identified in the indictment — as well as an election vendor and Democratic National Committee emails.

Russian government cyber actors tried to access Wisconsin's state IT systems in 2016 but weren't able to do so, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security revealed last year.

"We've seen the recent Mueller indictment and the Russians' ability to deconstruct our infrastructure," Thomsen said, adding, "as a commissioner, I'm concerned with what is happening."

Democratic Assembly Leader Gordon Hintz, in an interview Thursday, questioned why the Walker administration hasn't taken election security more seriously.

"There's no reason why we shouldn't expect more (hacking) attempts," said Hintz, D-Oshkosh. "Why is this such a low priority?"

Dipko said the department's Division of Enterprise Technology works with the Elections Commission and federal agencies to guard against cyber threats.

"The administration works proactively and aggressively to ensure our elections systems remain secure," Dipko said.

Walker last year vetoed a plan approved by Republican and Democratic lawmakers, as part of the state budget, to fill five elections staff positions. Walker said then that the commission "has been operating effectively with fewer staff."

The elections commission moved ahead anyway earlier this year after landing a \$7 million federal grant to pay for the new staff positions.

Another measure the commission approved in April to boost the cybersecurity of the state's voter-registration database also will not be done by the primary election, according to Magney. It calls for implementing multi-factor authentication for users of the state's voter registration database. That should be done by the end of August, he said.

Surprise, Maryland — Your Election Contractor Has Ties To Russia

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

MARYLAND LEADERS made an announcement this month that should drive home how vulnerable is the country's election infrastructure to Russian attack. Senior officials revealed that an Internet technology company with which the state contracts to hold electronic voting information is connected to a Russian oligarch who is "very close" to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Maryland leaders did not know about the connection until the FBI told them.

This is not to say that Maryland is a slacker on election security. The state is ahead of the curve relative to its peers. If even motivated states can be surprised, what about the real laggards?

Maryland's exposure began when it chose a company to keep electronic information on voter

registration, election results and other extremely sensitive data. That company was later purchased by a firm run by a Russian millionaire and heavily invested in by a Kremlin-connected Russian billionaire. At this point, the state does not have any sense that these Russia links have had any impact on the conduct of its elections, and it is scrambling to shore up its data handling before November's voting. But the fact that the ownership change's implications could have gone unnoticed by state officials is cause enough for concern. The quality of the contractors that states employ to handle a variety of election-related tasks is just one of many concerns election-security experts have identified since Russia's manipulation campaign in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

To its credit, Maryland has pushed to upgrade its election infrastructure over the past several years. It rented new voting machines in advance of the 2016 vote to ensure that they left a paper trail. State elections officials proudly note that they hire an independent auditor to conduct a parallel count based on those paper records, with automatic recounts if there is a substantial discrepancy between the two tallies. Observers note that the state could still do better, for example by conducting manual post-election audits as well as electronic ones. But the state is still far more responsible than many others.

Politico's Eric Geller recently surveyed 40 states about how they would spend new federal election-security funding Congress recently approved. The results were depressing. "Only 13 states said they intend to use the federal dollars to buy new voting machines. At least 22 said they have no plans to replace their machines before the election — including all five states that rely solely on paperless electronic voting devices, which cybersecurity experts consider a top vulnerability," Mr. Geller wrote. "In addition, almost no states conduct robust, statistic-based post-election audits to look for evidence of tampering after the fact. And fewer than one-third of states and territories have requested a key type of security review from the Department of Homeland Security."

Meanwhile, Congress seems uninterested in offering any more financial help, despite states' glaring needs. Federal lawmakers last week nixed a \$380 million election-security measure. That does not mean states are off the hook — it means they have to press their representatives in Washington to change course, or find the money elsewhere.

The Threat To Our Democracy? Our Indifference To Fixing Our Voting Machines. | Editorial

By The Inquirer Editorial Board

[Philly \(PA\)](#), July 20, 2018

Not that anyone living in the reality-based world needed more convincing, but the recent indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officials charged with interfering in the 2016 election, and President Trump's apparent alliance with Russian President Vladimir Putin in denying the hacks, underscores the seriousness of this attack on the United States' democracy.

Prior to the indictment, the Republican-led Senate Intelligence Committee said in May that the Russian government "conducted an unprecedented, coordinated cyber campaign against state election infrastructure."

Trump's willful blindness to the Russian cyberattacks means the U.S. remains vulnerable to interference in future elections. All the more reason why states, including Pennsylvania, must move to protect our voting system from such attacks.

Pennsylvania is particularly susceptible to attack. Most voting machines in the state — including in Philadelphia — are old and do not provide a paper record to safeguard against fraud. After Texas, Pennsylvania has the most registered voters using machines with no paper trail, according to Verified Voting, a nonpartisan group promoting trustworthy voting systems. (New Jersey and Delaware voting machines also lack paper records.)

A former National Security Agency engineer said Pennsylvania is a ripe target since it is a battleground state. "If I was a 400-pound hacker, I would target Pennsylvania," said Ben Johnson, chief security strategist at Carbon Black, a cybersecurity firm, referencing Trump's ridiculous 2016 comment that the hackers could be someone "sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds."

In April, Gov. Wolf told county officials to replace their electronic voting machines with devices that leave a verifiable paper trail by the end of 2019. But the lack of funding to cover the estimated \$125 million cost remains a roadblock.

Congress appropriated \$380 million in March to bolster election security nationwide. But Pennsylvania's share of the funding was only \$13.5 million.

Homeland Security officials said Pennsylvania was one of 21 states targeted by Russian hackers before the 2016 election. Hackers succeeded in breaching the system in Illinois, but there was no evidence the vote tallies were altered.

Securing our voting system is not a partisan issue. Indeed, concerns about Pennsylvania's voting machines predate the Russian election interference.

In 2006, a coalition of concerned voters filed a lawsuit challenging the lack of a paper record. But nine years later, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of the paperless voting machines, allowing the vulnerable devices to remain in use.

In 2006, a team of computer experts at the National Institute of Standards and Technology could not verify the accuracy of votes cast on paperless touchscreen machines.

In 2015, Mayor Michael Nutter allocated \$22 million to replace the voting machines in Philadelphia. At the time, City Council President Darrell Clarke said he was "not feeling" the funding request.

At least one state has moved quickly to upgrade its outmoded voting machines. Last September, Virginia banned the use of the paperless voting machines and ordered ones that provide a paper record by this November. Pennsylvania and other states need to act with the same urgency.

The external threat from Russia shouldn't be diminished, but the biggest danger to our democracy is our own civic indifference to ensuring that voting systems are effective in making every vote count, and every election outcome valid.

NASCIO President Asks House Subcommittee For Help Harmonizing Federal Regulations

By Colin Wood

[StateScoop](#), July 22, 2018

Oklahoma CIO James "Bo" Reese told lawmakers some progress is being made where state information technology is concerned, but that new laws are needed to simplify a complex regulatory environment.

Last November, state technology offices asked the White House Office of Management and Budget to "harmonize" confusing and inconsistent federal regulations that, state leaders argued, waste agency resources. On Wednesday, Oklahoma Chief Information Officer James "Bo" Reese revisited the topic before a U.S. House subcommittee, saying some progress has been made.

"But in typical state government fashion, it's slow going," Reese told the House Oversight Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee. "We're seeking support to continue those actions."

In his prepared testimony, Reese pointed to the expansive list of federal regulations state agencies must adhere to — including from the FBI, Internal Revenue

Service and Social Security Administration — that pull resources away from other operations, including cybersecurity, compromising both state governments' efficiency and ability to meet their primary goals.

"Federal data security regulations and accompanying audits have not kept pace with changing state government IT business models and are increasingly hindering the ability of state CIOs to streamline processes and deliver savings to state taxpayers," Reese said.

Also testifying was Oliver Sherouse, a policy analyst for the Mercatus Center, a libertarian think tank at George Mason University. Sherouse described his group's technology designed to help legislators better understand and address the vast breadth of federal regulations faced by state government, businesses, healthcare institutions, banks and other organizations.

"Today there are more than 103 million words in the code of federal regulations, including 1.08 million individual regulatory restrictions," he said. "That means if you were to read the code as your full-time job, it would take you three years, 111 days and a bit past lunchtime the next day. By the time you finished, you would need to immediately start figuring out what had changed since you started, and that's no easy task since the code increases by more than 1.4 million words every year."

Reese, who's also the president of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers, cited his state's and others' struggles in regulatory compliance: Oklahoma, he said, spends 10,712 hours each year on compliance; Maine spent 11,160 hours responding to six federal regulatory audits; Kansas estimated it spends 14,580 managing federal audits and compliance every three years; and Colorado estimated 2,760 hours annually.

"We'd rather be spending our time and efforts updating legacy systems and trying to enhance our security posture rather than trying to meet some of these — in many cases outdated — regulatory compliances," Reese told the panel.

Consolidated state IT environments are particularly affected, Reese said, because auditors will often return, unnecessarily, several times to audit the same systems in a single year. Included in Reese's written testimony was an example provided by Kentucky CIO David Carter.

"We are audited across four agencies for the IRS and three for the SSA," Carter wrote. "This is single source data from a common federal repository. Where one compliance review would suffice, I have to respond to seven. Adding these to the other requirements within our environment, we respond to 23 to 26 audits annually diverting resources, time, and investment from matters

that provide meaningful risk reduction across our infrastructure as a whole.”

Worse, Reese continued, the repeated audits are conducted by third parties with different understandings and interpretations of both the systems they are auditing and the regulations they are enforcing. Data provided to NASCIO showed that five Louisiana state agencies were assessed by five separate IRS assessors all auditing the same exact statewide information security policy, yet those assessments yielded five wildly varying scores.

In another example, Reese showed how federal agencies can require states to meet varying requirements for the same issue, such how to manage invalid login attempts to a state system. One IRS publication requires “a limit of 3 consecutive invalid login attempts by a user during a 120 min period, and automatically lock account for at least 15 mins.” But the FBI’s Criminal Justice Information Services Division requires a “limit of no more than 5 consecutive invalid attempts, otherwise locking system for 10 mins.,” while the Social Security Administration “recommends” systems limit user attempts at “no fewer than three (3) and no greater than five (5).”

Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., pointed out that this is “not a big deal” because states can simply combine the regulations themselves to ensure they are meeting the most strict requirements across all of them.

“On the other hand, why should it be so difficult for the federal government on that to come up with one governing principle?” Raskin said.

Raskin also painted the discussion in broader political terms, defining himself as a firm defender of federal regulations, and criticizing his GOP colleagues and the Trump administration for making deregulation “a mindless political fetish” that he called “risky and dangerous.”

Reese suggested Congress form a working group or committee to identify and harmonize these disparities in regulations. He also asked that federal regulators be required to “communicate their audit priorities and results not just to the programmatic agencies but also to all affected stakeholders, including state CIOs.”

The subcommittee’s chairman, Rep. Gary Palmer, R-Ala., said that the narrative “that us on the Republican side of the aisle are just trying to get rid of regulations is political nonsense. What we want are sensible regulations.”

Raskin and Palmer agreed, however, that Reese’s requests were specific enough that they didn’t apply to any broader attack against federal regulation.

Robert Weissman, president of the consumer-advocacy group Public Citizen, said that Reese’s

complaints show a specific need related to government-led cybersecurity efforts.

“In the cyber area, the big problem is that there is no overarching legal framework, and though the executive could come up with one, Congress has actually failed on this,” Weissman said. “We do have a crying need ... for overarching cyber protection.”

Palmer cited his previous experience working with state government and said he’s seen firsthand how these regulations can waste resources and confuse everyone involved. He admitted that while regulations have made the country healthier and safer, he also pointed out that sometimes businesses, government agencies, and even the regulators themselves have difficulty understanding exactly what is being required.

“[The regulators] are trying to do a good job,” Palmer said, “but they’re as frustrated as everybody else.”

Iran Has Laid Groundwork For Extensive Cyberattacks On U.S., Say Officials

[NBC News](#), July 20, 2018

Iranian hackers have laid the groundwork to carry out extensive cyberattacks on U.S. and European infrastructure and on private companies, and the U.S. is warning allies, hardening its defenses and weighing a counterattack, say multiple senior U.S. officials.

Despite Iran having positioned cyber weapons to carry out attacks, there is no suggestion an offensive operation is imminent, according to the officials, who requested anonymity in order to speak.

Cyber threats have been a major theme of the 2018 Aspen Security Forum, with administration officials from Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, FBI Director Chris Wray, and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein all warning of the pervasive danger from Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.

In Aspen Thursday, Coats said that Russia was a more active cyber foe than Iran or China — “by far” the most aggressive, he said.

While Russia may be the most aggressive, the U.S. officials said Iran is making preparations that would enable denial-of-service attacks against thousands of electric grids, water plants, and health care and technology companies in the U.S., Germany, the U.K. and other countries in Europe and the Middle East.

A spokesperson for the Iranian mission to the United Nations charged the U.S. is the aggressor in the cyber domain. “Iran has no intention of engaging in any kind of cyber war with the U.S.,” the spokesperson, Alireza Miryousefi, said in a statement. “Frankly, from our perspective, it’s more likely the U.S. wants the supposed

suspicion of an attack as rationalization for a cyberattack against Iran.”

“The U.S. is the most belligerent cyber attacker of any nation in the world, repeatedly attacking military and civilian targets across the world including in Iran,” said Miryousefi. “The U.S. has also undermined international efforts to establish global rules surrounding cyber issues. While we cannot comment on specific cyber capabilities or operational detail, we can say that our cyber activities are defensive in nature and necessary for our country’s protection.”

A spokesperson for the National Security Council declined to comment.

The U.S. has not yet decided whether it will retaliate in the event of an attack, according to U.S. officials, but the White House has already begun to ready new sanctions against Tehran and continues to amp up its anti-Iran rhetoric as it builds a case for its more confrontational stance.

President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the multinational 2015 nuclear deal with Iran in May, and the U.S. government has warned that if other nations follow suit Iran could retaliate in the cyber domain. Though Iranian hackers have previously probed U.S. infrastructure, targeting U.S. electrical grids alone would mark a significant escalation in Iran’s use of cyber-warfare to date.

After the U.S. pulled out of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen testified before Congress that the U.S. was “anticipating it’s a possibility” that Iran would increase cyberattacks in the coming weeks and months and that the U.S. “will be prepared.” Nielsen said the U.S. has a posture called “shields up” it can institute when anticipating a possible attack.

Should the JCPOA collapse entirely, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, an Iran expert and a fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative think tank in Washington, the infrastructure of Western countries might be an attractive target to the Iranians.

“Iran has a penchant for using such tools against the West,” said Ben Taleblu. “The cyber domain permits the Islamic Republic to engage in graduated escalation, a hallmark of Iranian security policy.”

U.S. officials have alerted America’s allies in Europe and the Middle East to the potential Iranian threat and have begun preparing a menu of possible responses, according to both current and former U.S. officials. It’s unclear if the options include a preemptive cyberattack to deter Iran from launching one.

Senior U.S. officials remain divided over the use of a pre-emptive cyberattack.

Some administration officials have argued in favor of offensive cyber operations, while others, including the former White House official who was overseeing the policy, have advised against that, one former White House official said.

The issue is in part what has delayed the finalization of the Trump administration’s overall cyber policy, according to one former official.

The cyber threat comes as the Trump administration has focused more publicly on Iranian threats.

The Trump administration is poised to adopt new sanctions against Iran this summer as part of its withdrawal from the JCPOA. Trump’s decision to pull out on May 8 began a 90-day clock for the U.S. to reinstate sanctions on Iran.

The administration has also suggested recently that Iran is using its embassies to plan terrorist attacks, following the disruption of an alleged plot in the Iranian embassy in Austria to bomb a meeting of opposition leaders in Paris. Iran called the allegations “baseless” and “preposterous,” saying the plot was a “false flag” operation staged by regime opponents.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has led the charge against Iran, warning during a visit to the United Arab Emirates that Iran would pay “a high cost” for its aggression in the region after Tehran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz to disrupt Middle East oil supplies.

Pompeo also said in an interview with Sky News Arabia that the Trump administration is planning “a number of things” to confront Iran, including “a series of sanctions aimed not at the Iranian people, but rather aimed at the singular mission of convincing the Iranian regime that its malign behavior is unacceptable and has a real high cost for them.”

Current and former U.S. officials noted that Iran has a history of using cyberattacks to retaliate against such actions. Its use of cyberattacks subsided after the U.S. and other world powers reached the 2015 nuclear agreement.

“Iran’s interest in offensive cyber operations is well known and America and its partners would be well advised to consider the likelihood that Iran will mount cyber operations as sanctions are imposed,” said Norman Roule, a former top CIA official on Iran.

U.S. intelligence officials recently have observed Iranian hackers probing America’s electric grid, which cyber experts say they have done in the past.

“The Iranians have been doing these types of probes for years now — mapping out the networks of critical infrastructure to find potential vulnerabilities,” said James Lewis, who worked on cyber security and intelligence as a senior State Department official.

An attack on infrastructure would be far more aggressive than previous Iranian cyberattacks, which have largely focused on American business entities and targets in Persian Gulf states and Israel, said cyber experts who advise U.S. government agencies and corporations.

"It seems like their attention has been very focused on regional adversaries," said Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike.

The U.S. and Iran have a history of trading cyberattacks. In 2016, U.S. prosecutors charged seven Iranian computer experts linked to the government with a series of cyberattacks on U.S. banks and a New York dam.

Four years earlier, Tehran was accused of unleashing a computer virus known as Shamoon that erased data on tens of thousands of computers at Saudi Aramco, the Saudi state-owned oil company.

Last year, a sophisticated assault on a petrochemical plant in Saudi Arabia nearly succeeded in sabotaging operations and triggering an explosion. Cyber security experts said Iran was almost certainly behind the attack.

In written testimony presented to Congress in March, DNI Coats wrote, "Iran's cyberattacks against Saudi Arabia in late 2016 and early 2017 involved data deletion on dozens of networks across government and the private sector."

In 2010 it became publicly known that the U.S. and Israel had unleashed a destructive cyber weapon against Iran's nuclear program known as Stuxnet, a targeted, sophisticated computer virus that caused physical damage to Iran's nuclear centrifuges.

The Trump administration's increasingly bellicose rhetoric about Iran has raised concerns among lawmakers on Capitol Hill that this could be reminiscent of the George W. Bush administration's push to invade Iraq in 2003, which relied in part on now-discredited intelligence. In an op-ed article in *The Atlantic* published July 13, Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., compared the language to the days leading up the war in Iraq.

"I fear the United States is on the verge of blundering into another unnecessary war with Iraq's next-door neighbor Iran. The same warning signs are on the horizon, and I hope we will turn back from the foolish path we seem to be taking," wrote Kaine, the former Democratic nominee for vice president. "We cannot afford another unnecessary war, and Congress and the public must be vigilant to stop it."

U.S. intelligence had previously warned about growing cyber threats from Iran and other, sometimes more technically advanced countries.

In his March 2018 written testimony to Congress, Coats wrote that Russia, Iran, and North Korea "are testing more aggressive cyberattacks that pose growing threats to the United States and U.S. partners."

Coats wrote that U.S. intelligence agencies assessed that "Iran will continue working to penetrate U.S. and Allied networks for espionage and to position itself for potential future cyberattacks, although its intelligence services primarily focus on Middle Eastern adversaries — especially Saudi Arabia and Israel."

On July 13, Coats told the Hudson Institute in Washington that the warning signs about coming cyber threats are similar to the signs the U.S. saw before Sept. 11, 2001.

"The warning lights are blinking red again," said Coats. "Today the digital infrastructure that serves the country is literally under attack." Coats said Russia was the worst offender, but also named Iran, China and North Korea as adversaries.

Huawei Poses New Risks To UK Telecom Networks, Says...

[Daily Mail \(UK\)](#), July 20, 2018

A Government investigation into the use of Huawei's equipment across UK telecommunication networks has exposed "new risks".

The Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Centre (HCSEC) Oversight Board published a report saying there are "shortcomings" in the Chinese firm's engineering processes, meaning it could only provide "limited assurance" over the risk to UK national security.

"Huawei's processes continue to fall short of industry good practice and make it difficult to provide long-term assurance," the board said.

It added that a lack of progress fixing the issues was "disappointing" and would require "significant work".

The board — made up of UK security officials — also found "security-critical third party software used in a variety of products was not subject to sufficient control", following a technical visit to Huawei's site in Shenzhen last year.

Huawei said: "The Oversight Board has identified some areas for improvement in our engineering processes.

"We are grateful for this feedback and committed to addressing these issues.

"Cyber security remains Huawei's top priority, and we will continue to actively improve our engineering processes and risk management systems."

The report is the fourth of its kind. The board was set up in 2010 in response to the Chinese firm's

increased collaboration with British-based telecom giants including BT, O2 and TalkTalk.

Huawei, the world's biggest telecoms equipment supplier, signed a £10 billion deal with BT in 2005 to help upgrade its network.

In 2013, Parliament's intelligence and security committee criticised the Government for not investigating the use of Huawei's equipment and said it was "shocked" that ministers had not been informed about the company's involvement with BT eight years ago.

Huawei has also faced scrutiny in the US, where a deal between the country's AT&T operator to sell Huawei's smartphones was called off in January.

Six senior intelligence chiefs, including the heads of the CIA, FBI, NSA and national intelligence, recently warned against using smartphones made by Huawei and its Chinese rival ZTE.

"We're deeply concerned about the risks of allowing any company or entity that is beholden to foreign governments that don't share our values to gain positions of power inside our telecommunications networks," FBI director Chris Wray said in February.

Huawei responded, saying it is "trusted by governments and customers in 170 countries worldwide and poses no greater cybersecurity risk than any ICT vendor".

Every 2016 Presidential Campaign Operation Was Cyber Attacked, Says Se

By Sean Captain

[Fast Company](#), July 20, 2018

Whether via Russian agents or other hackers around the world, every significant 2016 presidential campaign was targeted by cyber attacks, says the company that sought to protect them with cybersecurity measures. "In 2016 . . . we had 16 of the 17 major U.S. presidential candidates as customers," says Matthew Prince, CEO of online security service Cloudflare. "[They ranged] the political spectrum from Bernie Sanders to Donald Trump—everyone, actually, except Hillary Clinton, somewhat ironically."

The most devastating of those attacks, of course, was the hacking of the Democratic National Committee (also not a Cloudflare customer) and the Clinton campaign, of course. Special Counsel Robert Mueller's indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officers on July 13 highlights the depth of those attacks in crystal-clear detail (regardless of President Trump's day-to-day views on the matter). Mueller also reported evidence of attacks on public entities like state boards of election. Suspicious ties

Prince would not say if any of the campaign sites Cloudflare sought to protect, in the U.S. and other countries, has ever been breached. A case study on Cloudflare's site, however, states that the DonaldJTrump.com site was never beached or brought down, despite receiving an average of 500,000 attacks per day.

Prince doesn't claim that Cloudflare could have prevented the attacks on the Clinton campaign or the DNC—which go well beyond websites and involved phishing attacks on individual email accounts, but he does say that Mueller's findings indicate that the same hackers may have targeted Cloudflare clients—political or otherwise (which he declined to clarify).

"I think it's fair to say that we have seen attacks that follow a lot of the same signatures that have been described by, for instance, the FBI and Robert Mueller in some of the Russian investigations," says Prince. Cloudflare doesn't trace attacks all the way back to the source, as Mueller's team has done. Its job is to block and absorb an attack—by sitting between its customers and the open internet—not to find the culprit. (Competitors including Akamai, Amazon Web Services, and Incapsula provide similar security services.)

But Cloudflare does see the final source of a hack—the last online hop for launching something such as a distributed denial of service attack, which crashes a server by flooding it with way more data than it can handle.

These and other attacks typically come from either large servers or networks of individual computers that are commandeered by hackers. "We see lots of attacks coming out of Brazil," says Prince. "I don't think that's necessarily because the Brazilians are trying to undermine democracy. I think it's much more likely that Brazil just has a lot of people [with vulnerable computers]."

Prince says that Cloudflare clients may have been attacked by the same compromised computers used in the Russian-lead attacks. That's one signature of the attackers.

Another specialty are so-called dictionary attacks—firing massive lists of username-and-password pairs at a login page until one of them works. "If the same attacker attacks two different election sites with the same list, then the [entries] would be in the same order, so that would be one easy-to-understand signature," says Prince, who adds that Cloudflare has repelled dictionary attacks using the same lists that Mueller identified.

Neither of these attack types is terribly sophisticated. So-called script kiddies using pre-built software tools could carry out such hack attempts. "Any of these high-profile elections will get a wide range of

attacks from a lot of different parties,” says Prince, “some of which I’m sure are foreign, and some of which I’m sure are domestic kids that are screwing around.” Perhaps candidate Trump’s theory about a hacker as “someone sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds” could be true in some instances. But Mueller—and major U.S. intelligence agencies—have made a solid case for Russia in the Clinton and DNC incidents. Chaos and mayhem

There have also been many well-documented and strongly suspected attacks on election authorities—something that prompted Cloudflare to offer free protection to authorities like state or county boards of election in the US, through what it calls the Athenian Project. (Other companies are also volunteering their security services.)

“It’s not necessarily that the attackers are trying to support one side or the other—which naively when we started working on it would have been my assumption,” says Prince. “This is about subverting the process so that whoever wins has a harder time governing,” he says.

A process plagued by outages of resources like voter registration sites, or by bogus reporting of results, can make an entire election appear illegitimate (not unlike Trump’s unsubstantiated claim that three million noncitizens cast votes in 2016).

The end of innocence

The rise in attacks on campaigns and election authorities in the U.S. has been dramatic, says Prince, whose company has contracted with candidates “around the world,” he says, such as “both sides” in the 2012 Mexican presidential election, in which the attacks was “just insane,” as he describes it. (He presumably means that Cloudflare worked with the two leading candidates—Enrique Peña Nieto and Andrés Manuel López Obrador—but did not clarify that, either.)

“The thing that really surprises me is how much cyber attacks played a role in elections around the world, but that we hadn’t seen nearly as much of that in the U.S.,” says Prince.

Prince claims that Cloudflare is able to win so many campaigns as clients because it starts with a free offering to small businesses. Already on the system, the campaigns that become successful grow into the paid service tiers.

Those U.S. clients had a rude awakening in the last presidential contest. “Early on, it looked like any other U.S. election, where cyber attacks seemed like a very minor part of the story, but as the race went on the attacks against all the candidates started going up and up and up,” says Prince. “Unfortunately, I think that the

last election showed that U.S. democracy is more fragile than we all thought.”

Rep. John Ratcliffe Unveils DHS Cybersecurity Modernization Bill

[ExecutiveGov](#), July 20, 2018

The proposed Advancing Cybersecurity Diagnostics and Mitigation Act aims to give CDM a boost in the hopes that it can keep up with emerging cyber technologies and guard against potential cybersecurity threats, Ratcliffe’s office said Wednesday.

“CDM is a critical component of our national cyber security strategy,” Ratcliffe said, and explained that the bill is meant to extend the program’s lifespan, maintain concurrence with technologies in the private sector and prevent system obsolescence issues in government agencies.

The proposed legislation also includes the development of procedures and policies for the reporting of enterprise cybersecurity vulnerabilities and potential incidents identified from CDM-gathered data.

Ratcliffe stated that “cybersecurity is national security” and noted the need to address threats to the national digital border through risk-based approaches via programs such as the CDM.

For US Cybersecurity, It’s Code Red

By Hiawatha Bray

[Boston Globe](#), July 20, 2018

With his soft voice and calm Midwestern demeanor, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats doesn’t seem like a scary guy. But lately, Coats has been saying some pretty scary things, and not just about Russia’s Internet-based interference in US elections. Coats is warning that weaknesses in US cybersecurity could be setting us up for a high-tech replay of the devastating terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

“It was in the months prior to September 2001 when, according to then-CIA Director George Tenet, the system was blinking red,” Coats said recently at a Washington, D.C., think tank. “And here we are nearly two decades later, and I’m here to say the warning lights are blinking red again.”

A host of corporate and academic cybersecurity experts say Coats has every reason to worry, and so do the rest of us.

“It’s very scary out there,” said Joel Brenner, a senior research fellow in international studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former inspector general of the US National Security Agency. “People have little idea how relentlessly our critical infrastructure as well as our government agencies are being attacked, around the clock.”

An afternoon recap of the day's most important business news, delivered weekdays.

Coats says Russia is the worst offender, but it has plenty of company, including the US economic archrival China, and rogue states like Iran and North Korea. In addition, the terrorist Islamic State movement has become a sophisticated and dangerous online foe. On top of all that, there's the threat of powerful criminal gangs that are using ransomware to extort millions of dollars by crippling computers in businesses, hospitals, and even law enforcement agencies.

Any one of these entities would pose a formidable menace. The United States must somehow prepare to cope with all of them as they target government agencies, businesses, and consumers.

In recent years, the federal government has suffered a series of devastating digital security lapses. In 2015, the federal Office of Personnel Management revealed that hackers, probably sponsored by China, had stolen the personnel records of 22 million current and former government employees — a treasure trove of data for foreign spies. And in 2016, a mysterious group called the Shadow Brokers published an array of hacking tools stolen from the National Security Agency, making these sophisticated tools available to spies and criminals worldwide.

The federal government will spend about \$15 billion on cybersecurity-related activities this year, a 4 percent increase from the previous fiscal year, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, a budget watchdog group. But updating federal cybersecurity is a massive undertaking. Indeed, the US Office of Management and Budget reported in May that of 96 federal agencies it studied, only 25 had implemented proper security policies.

"We're still about nine and a half years behind where we ought to be," said Gregory Touhill, a retired US Air Force general and president of Cyxtera Federal Group, which works with government agencies on data security issues. Touhill said many agencies use cybersecurity tools so obsolete, "we can take 'em out for a beer because they're 22 years old."

Millions of American businesses are just as vulnerable, including companies that operate the nation's critical infrastructure — electric power, water, and aviation, for example. In March, the Department of Homeland Security said Russian hackers had worked their way inside the computer networks of a number of US companies that deliver these critical services. The attackers stole information, but they could have done something far more dangerous — like shutting down electrical power plants, as Russian attackers did in Ukraine in 2015 and 2016.

Scott Aaronson, vice president of security and preparedness for the Edison Electric Institute, a power utility trade group, said a nation like Russia wouldn't mount a similar attack against the United States because it would lead to war. A terrorist organization like the Islamic State would do it, but lacks the know-how.

"But that's true until it isn't," Aaronson said.

So electric utilities are spending large sums to harden their infrastructure, just in case. One key tactic is the reintroduction of manual controls for managing the power grid, to be used as backups in case hackers take over a utility's computer systems. Also, since 2013, electrical utility executives have met regularly with each other and with federal officials to plan their responses to cyberattacks.

Other critical sectors of the economy have made similar arrangements. For instance, the United States and the UK run regular "war games" to test the capacity of major banks to resist massive online attacks aimed at stealing billions of dollars, or worse — crashing the entire global economy.

But even the millions of smart devices in our homes could be used as staging areas for a cyber-Pearl Harbor. In 2016, attackers seized control of thousands of Internet-connected consumer devices like digital video cameras and baby monitors. They then used this "botnet" of subverted devices to launch an assault against Dyn, a New Hampshire company that routes huge amounts of Internet traffic. The attack temporarily shuttered or crippled several of the world's most popular Internet sites, including Twitter, CNN, Fox News, and Netflix.

That's just a taste of what criminals or hostile governments could do as billions of digital consumer devices with weak security features are plugged into the burgeoning Internet of Things.

"When computers are embedded in everything, everything is vulnerable," said Bruce Schneier, a fellow at Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society and author of a forthcoming book on network security, "Click Here To Kill Everybody."

Schneier believes it's only a matter of time before hackers cause fatal accidents by seizing control of Internet-connected cars, or kill people directly by causing malfunctions in Internet-connected medical devices like pacemakers. An enemy state or terrorist organization might manage to hack thousands of such devices, with catastrophic results.

There's only one hope of preventing such a disaster, Schneier said — government-mandated standards for all Internet-connected devices, to ensure that they meet basic safety standards and can be easily

upgraded to compensate for newly discovered security flaws.

"One hundred percent law and regulation," Schneier said. "Nothing else will work." Hiawatha Bray can be reached at hiawatha.bray@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @GlobeTechLab.

'Big Red Flag': Automakers' Trade Secrets Exposed In Data Leak

By Stacy Cowley

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

Automakers like Tesla, Toyota and Volkswagen go to great lengths to keep their technical information confidential. Details about assembly line machinery and proprietary robotics are among the industry's most closely guarded trade secrets.

But this month, a security researcher came across tens of thousands of sensitive corporate documents — including many from nearly all of the largest auto manufacturers — on the open internet, unprotected. The trove included material from more than 100 companies that had interacted with a small Canadian company, Level One Robotics and Controls.

Among the documents were detailed blueprints and factory schematics; client materials such as contracts, invoices and work plans; and even dozens of nondisclosure agreements describing the sensitivity of the exposed information.

"That was a big red flag," said Chris Vickery, the researcher who found the data. "If you see NDAs, you know right away that you've found something that's not supposed to be publicly available."

It was unclear whether anyone else had seen or downloaded the unguarded data, which included some personal information, such as scanned driver's licenses and passports, on Level One employees but otherwise appeared to be confined to corporate secrets. Mr. Vickery alerted the company last week, and the exposed information was taken offline within a day.

But the inadvertent exposure of customers' data illustrates a problem confounding businesses: Some of their biggest security risks come from their suppliers and contractors.

Many of the worst recent data breaches began with a vendor's mistake. In 2013, thieves infiltrated Target's payment terminals and stole credit and debit card information from 40 million customers. The attackers got in by hacking one of Target's heating and ventilation contractors, then using information stolen from that business to gain access to Target's systems.

Just last month, Ticketmaster revealed that payment information from thousands of customers had

recently been stolen in a breach it attributed to flawed software from Inbenta, a company running customer support chatbots on TicketMaster's website.

Fifty-six percent of the businesses polled last year by Ponemon Institute, a security research firm, said they had at some point experienced a data breach linked to a vendor. The exposure only grows as more third-party companies gain access: The survey's respondents said an average of 470 outside companies had access to their sensitive corporate information, up from around 380 a year earlier.

"It's relatively recently that C-level executives have begun to acknowledge that some of their third-party relationships are creating unbelievable risk," said Larry Ponemon, the research firm's founder.

The auto industry has a deep and complex supply chain, and third-party security risk is an area of growing concern, said Faye Francy, the executive director of the Automotive Information Sharing and Analysis Center, a trade group that focuses on cybersecurity.

Generally, automakers' top security priority is vehicle risks, she said, such as vulnerabilities that could be used to attack a car's critical components. Leaked corporate documents aren't quite as fraught — "I doubt anyone is going to die over it," Ms. Francy said — but the exposure of such information is still worrying.

"No one wants their data outside of their own company," she said. "Anything that showcases how they manufacture is proprietary and competitive."

Mr. Vickery, the director of cyber risk research at UpGuard, a security services company in Mountain View, Calif., has made a career out of hunting unguarded data caches.

He's a rarity in the industry: a security sleuth who doesn't hack. Instead, he searches communication ports and the internet's hive of connected devices to find information inadvertently made public. His discoveries have included medical records, airport security files, hotel bookings, a terrorist screening database and 87 million Mexican voter registration records. Once the sensitive information has been secured, he publicly discloses that the data had been revealed.

Mr. Vickery found Level One's data through an exposed backup server. It required no password or special access permissions, he said. Anyone who connected could download the material, which totaled at least 157 gigabytes and contained nearly 47,000 files filled with factory records and diagrams from companies including Fiat Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Tesla, Toyota and Volkswagen.

Milan Gasko, Level One's chief executive, declined to discuss the details of the exposed information.

"Level One takes these allegations very seriously and is diligently working to conduct a full investigation of the nature, extent and ramifications of this alleged data exposure," he said. "In order to preserve the integrity of this investigation, we will not be providing comment at this time."

Mr. Gasko said it was "extremely unlikely" that the data had been viewed by any outside parties other than Mr. Vickery, but he did not address questions about whether Level One has tools in place to detect unauthorized access.

Level One was founded in 2000 in Windsor, Ontario, and opened an American office six years later outside Detroit. The company provides engineering services, with a focus on robotics and automation, to manufacturing companies, according to its website.

Officials from General Motors, Toyota and Volkswagen declined to comment on the data exposure. Fiat Chrysler, Ford and Tesla did not respond to requests for comment.

Researchers like Mr. Vickery often face skepticism, and criticism, from the companies that they notify about exposed data — no business likes to get a phone call telling it that it has revealed sensitive information. But publicizing data breaches is an effective way to get other companies to combat them, he said.

"Nothing gets better in silence, as far as cybersecurity goes," Mr. Vickery said. "Human nature is to try to sweep things under the rug. That hurts our society. We need better data security, and nothing improves unless people realize there's a problem."

China, EU Seize Control Of The World's Cyber Agenda

The U.S. guided global internet policy for decades. Now, the EU and China are taking the lead.

By Eric Geller

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

The United States is losing ground as the internet's standard-bearer in the face of aggressive European privacy standards and China's draconian vision for a tightly controlled Web.

The weakening American position comes as the European Union, filling a gap left by years of lax U.S. regulations, imposes data privacy requirements that companies like Facebook and Google must follow. At the same time, China is dictating companies' security practices with mandates that experts say will undermine global cybersecurity — without any significant pushback from the United States.

The result: Beijing and Brussels are effectively writing the rules that may determine the future of the

internet. And China's vision is spreading across the developing world as it influences similar laws in Vietnam, Tanzania and Nigeria.

Experts in cyber policy say the trends could slow the internet's growth, stunt innovation and erect new market barriers for American businesses. And while these trends began before Donald Trump became president, his administration has yet to devise a clear plan to rebut either of these agendas.

"The U.S. cannot afford to be on the sidelines," said Chris Painter, America's top cyber diplomat from 2011 to 2017, who is now with the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace. "Other countries are doing things legislatively that affect the U.S. ... and the U.S. is on the back foot."

One result of this shift is the erosion of the freewheeling U.S. vision of the internet that had reigned for decades. "The U.S. model looks both paralyzed and somewhat feckless, while the Europeans and the Chinese are making progress and, in many cases, damaging the openness of the internet," said Adam Segal, director of the Council on Foreign Relations' cyber policy program. "And we don't particularly have a coherent response to it."

The lack of U.S. leadership also harms ordinary Americans by letting industry block the adoption of strong protections against cyberattacks, said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), one of Congress' leading voices on cybersecurity and technology issues.

"The United States is failing on cybersecurity because our Congress has been captured by corporations who have successfully killed any effort to impose meaningful cyber standards," he told POLITICO in an email.

For years, the U.S. objected aggressively when China and other authoritarian regimes tried to co-opt international venues to push their cyber agendas. In 2015, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan introduced a "code of conduct for information security," which would have codified their vision of content regulation, but behind-the-scenes work by Western governments halted its momentum. The U.S. blocked similar efforts at a United Nations technology commission. And in 2010, the U.S. helped prevent a vote to hand a role in internet policymaking to the International Telecommunications Union, which would have given a stronger hand to authoritarian countries that often lose to the West in other settings.

"In all bilateral and multilateral encounters heretofore, the United States has successfully and consistently, in a bipartisan way, opposed" authoritarian visions for cyberspace, said a former State and Commerce department official who spent eight years

working on cyber issues and requested anonymity to speak candidly.

But the U.S. has offered only token opposition to the cybersecurity law that China imposed last year, which among other things requires companies operating in China to provide authorities with the source code to their software.

The U.S. has taken a much more modest approach to its own cybersecurity policy: It passed a cyber information sharing law in 2015 that gave companies legal immunity for sharing threat data with the government, and the National Institute of Technology and Standards introduced a voluntary “framework” for managing digital security risks. Industry groups praised these efforts, saying they influence policies worldwide.

But beyond these piecemeal steps, the U.S. has advanced no coherent vision of cybersecurity regulation to counter the ones from China and Europe. And Russia will soon try again with its cybersecurity “code of conduct” — with vague language discouraging interference in other states’ internal affairs — at the U.N. General Assembly in September.

The U.S. is at a disadvantage, Painter said, because while China and others roll out ambitious plans, American diplomats call for only modest reforms. “If the U.S. line is, ‘Leave the status quo as it is,’ that’s always hard,” he said.

Chinese Communist Party leaders see cybersecurity “as a fundamental part of their governance model,” said Samm Sacks, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. And President Xi Jinping has taken a personal interest in the topic, beyond how most world leaders engage with the issue.

Meanwhile, Beijing’s grip on domestic affairs gives it an advantage over the U.S. when it comes to laying down the law.

The result is China’s cybersecurity law, which took effect on June 1, 2017, creating vaguely defined inspection regimes for network operators and critical infrastructure owners. These businesses must let Chinese officials test their equipment and software at any time. They must also store their data in China so investigators can access it. One provision could let Beijing demand companies’ decryption keys, which would effectively ban the unbreakable encryption found in apps like Signal.

But even as the fractious Chinese bureaucracy prepared to implement the law, Beijing was busy promoting its view of digital security controls abroad, focusing on developing nations that it hopes will join a coalition to counter the West’s more open internet agenda.

In a digital extension of its sweeping One Belt One Road initiative, China spent vast sums to expand internet connectivity in small and underdeveloped countries. It donated computers to governments in nearly three dozen countries, from Pakistan to Malawi to the small island state of Tonga. Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant that U.S. officials consider a cybersecurity risk, set up armies of security cameras in the Kenyan cities of Nairobi and Mombasa as part of its “Safe City” initiative.

Cyber experts suspect China’s generosity is driven by its strategic self-interest: Beijing wanted to have a foothold in these emerging countries’ computer networks. Evidence has occasionally emerged to support this view. In January, the French newspaper *Le Monde* reported that China had spent years spying on the African Union, whose headquarters it built and donated to the international organization in 2012. Buried in the facility’s ready-made computer network, the paper said, were backdoors letting Beijing monitor the African Union’s activities.

“China’s influence is second to none in terms of its relationships with developing countries and in terms of its expanding relationship, recently, with developed countries,” said the former State Department official. As a result, he said, “Chinese companies are essentially the lead [and] have inside access” to countries’ systems.

The U.S. government and American corporations also must deal with a newly aggressive Europe on cyber issues. In August 2016, the EU enacted its first major cyber law, which requires “operators of essential services” to “take appropriate and proportionate ... measures to manage” their cyber risks. The EU is now considering another law that would task its cyber agency, ENISA, with certifying security products in EU member states.

Both of these laws will force U.S. companies with European footprints to redesign their security measures to comply, and the more they do so, experts said, the more the EU position becomes the default. The same is true for the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation, which imposes tough data privacy and disclosure requirements — including the threat of massive fines for companies that violate them — and could undermine cybersecurity.

The White House is discussing introducing a GDPR competitor, according to news reports, but it may be too late — the European rule effectively kneecapped the United States’ ability to set global privacy standards at a lower level. “If you’re a company,” said the former State Department official, “you have to abide by the stricter standard.”

The question for the U.S. is whether to abandon its insistence on a voluntary, industry-led approach and enact more regulations that reflect a clear U.S. vision. Many experts said the American tradition of letting the private sector shape the debate has undercut the nation's standing globally.

Other countries "have looked around and said, 'All right, this doesn't really seem to be accomplishing very much,'" Segal said.

One option would be to follow China and the EU in passing a sweeping national cyber law. If it took a light touch but still imposed rules, and if the U.S. could demonstrate that it improved security, other countries would take note. But as recent history shows, such a law would have a difficult chance of passing Congress.

James Lewis, a cyber expert at CSIS, said the U.S. is the only country where extreme distrust of government prevents meaningful cyber regulations. "That's not how it works in the rest of the world," he said. "And I say that for both democracies and dictatorships. This overwhelming angst we have about government is not reflected anywhere else on the planet."

Industry executives say regulations aren't the answer. Chris Boyer, assistant vice president of public policy at AT&T, said the best "opportunity for the U.S. to proactively lead this conversation" lies in voluntary standards.

But many security experts argue that isn't enough. "These voluntary frameworks," said Segal, "have not really, as far as we can tell, improved U.S. security significantly."

Regardless of how the U.S. moves forward, experts said it must engage more aggressively in the international debate. "We should try to provide a clear road map of the type of approach we want to see other countries adopting," said the former State official. "Silence just cedes the ground to other views and other approaches that we fundamentally disagree with."

Sustained engagement will require a strategy on the part of the Trump administration. For now, the former official said, U.S. diplomats attending these meetings "don't say anything" and are "not relevant."

The administration's cyber leadership void has exacerbated the problem. National security adviser John Bolton eliminated the White House cyber coordinator role, the central figure overseeing all U.S. cyber activities, and former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson nixed Painter's top cyber diplomat role. A deputy assistant secretary of state, Rob Strayer, now manages cyber diplomacy, though a bill to elevate his office is nearing passage.

The State Department did not make Strayer available for an interview about the U.S. strategy.

"The degradation or the removal of certain roles is hugely important," said Josh Kallmer, senior vice president for global policy at the Information Technology Industry Council. He said his meetings with administration officials often involve "trying to reverse those things."

The battle isn't over yet, and China's agenda still faces hurdles. For one thing, although its cyber law is technically in place, many of its provisions have not yet been enacted, and regulatory agencies are competing over how to implement it. Plus, Chinese firms that want to dominate global markets are pushing back on Beijing's attempt to balkanize the internet.

"There are constraints internally in China's system that are going to be a check on some of the more alarming parts of this vision," Sacks said.

But even so, China is making a greater effort than the U.S., and the EU isn't far behind. "For the first time," said the former State Department official, "many, many, many countries ... rank much higher in influence than the U.S."

Lewis, reflecting on his recent conversations in Europe and Asia, was pessimistic. "The internet is going to be regulated, and it'll be regulated from Brussels and Beijing," he said. "We're kind of out of it, because we don't have a good counter."

Security Experts Warn Census Bureau: Beware Of Hackers

By Kriston Capps

[Atlantic's CityLab](#), July 20, 2018

Why national security experts want some answers as the Census Bureau prepares for its first electronic count in 2020.

The U.S. is planning an experiment in democracy: The 2020 census will be the first in the nation's history to be conducted electronically. The Census Bureau expects more households than not to participate in the process online using computers and even smartphones.

By ditching paper questionnaires, the bureau hopes to cut costs, streamline operations, and modernize the constitutionally mandated decennial count. But the decision to go from analog to digital couldn't come at a worse time. Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election has raised root-level questions about the government's readiness (and willingness) to shore up its cybersecurity protocols ahead of the midterms.

That's why a murderer's row of national security experts wrote to Commerce Department Secretary Wilbur Ross and Census Bureau Acting Director Ron Jarmin this week to ask for details about the bureau's

strategy for protecting its data. Putting sensitive data about every American within the potential reach of a foreign power's hackers could undermine public confidence in the census—or worse.

"There's a motive out there for certain adversaries to obtain personal identifying information, whether it's for criminal purposes, as we've seen with identity theft and stealing of credit-card information, or whether it's nation-state adversaries for other purposes," says Mary McCord, former acting assistant attorney general for national security at the Department of Justice.

McCord is now a visiting professor at Georgetown Law and a senior litigator in Georgetown's Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection, which arranged the memo. She and 10 other experts—all former career civil servants and political appointees from the National Security Council, National Security Agency, Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies—signed the letter to "urge the leadership of the Bureau and of the Department of Commerce to share publicly their plans for protecting information vital to the future of American voting but also tempting for adversaries that seek to harm our country and its foundational democratic processes."

To conduct the 2020 count, the Census Bureau aims to use electronic methods to both collect and store the data. That means these data are vulnerable to threats both in transmission and at rest. Paper questionnaires face potential risks, too, as they're scanned, uploaded, and stored in databases. The census includes information about every American resident, or at least that's the goal, and it's used to allocate congressional representation and federal funds. The census is critical, and even if none of the hypothetical threats against it come to bear, any public perception that the census isn't safe is a threat itself.

The Georgetown letter outlines two broad concerns with the next census. One is transparency. Response rates to the survey live or die by the public's trust in the process. For example, critics fear that the addition of an untested citizenship question may undermine public confidence in the 2020 census, leading to a potential undercount of vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations. Similarly, if the public comes to believe that the decennial count isn't secure, they may decline to participate. The Census Bureau has not responded publicly to requests from Congress or public-interest groups about its security protocols.

A more direct concern is that the bureau may be unprepared for an attack on census data. Danger can take multiple forms, including threats that the bureau may deal with internally (such as denial-of-service attacks or compromised devices) and external threats

beyond the bureau's control (rogue sites impersonating the census). Both criminal and nation-state actors have used these methods and more to steal data or, more recently, interfere with elections.

McCord says that she isn't aware of any specific threat to the census. But she notes that the Office of Personnel Management was subject to a devastating data breach in 2015. (Fingerprints for nearly 6 million individuals were stolen as a result.) Russian hackers busted into the State Department's computer system in 2014. North Korea may or may not have hacked Sony Pictures. It's not just rogue states: Half of all adult Americans were exposed in the Equifax credit data breach last fall. Chaos can come from all corners. President Donald Trump, who was briefed before his inauguration that Russian President Vladimir personally ordered the interference in his election, only begrudgingly accepted the fact this week. "The census is a pretty foundational thing for our democracy."

Given the ongoing investigation into Russia's attacks on the election, concerns that the same thing could happen with the census may weigh on people's minds. Exfiltration of Americans' personal data is one challenge, says Joshua Geltzer, executive director for the Georgetown institute, but it's not the only one. "Another is whether an actor with nefarious intent would actually go into the database and attempt to—I'll use a very non-legal word—mess with it. To alter the data, even minimally, but enough to undermine people's confidence in it."

In response to the Georgetown letter, the Census Bureau issued a statement defending its cybersecurity program as robust, if necessarily invisible to the public. "We have incorporated industry best practices and follow Federal IT security standards for encrypting data in transmission and at rest," the statement reads. "As a matter of data security, we do not disclose our specific encryption methods, but we would like to note, in response to the concerns of the letter, that two-factor authentication is required for all who access the data."

John Thompson, the former director of the Census Bureau who stepped down in May 2017, says that he is confident that the bureau's prep-work is up to snuff. "I think the Census Bureau is doing all of the right things to protect against cyber attacks," Thompson says. "That being said, one can never relax vigilance, or concern in the environment we are in today."

Others who have had a close look at the Census Bureau's preparations are less sanguine. In April, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that said that "the Bureau has not addressed several security risks and challenges to secure its systems and data, including making certain that security assessments are

completed in a timely manner, and that risks are at an acceptable level.”

For its part, the Census Bureau has been forced to work under severe cost restraints mandated by Congress. Top-level vacancies may also be frustrating the bureau (or at least its ability to comply with congressional requests). Trump backed a controversial pick for deputy director, who would not require Senate confirmation (and would be the de facto acting director), until the would-be nominee backed down. Mayors and other critics have accused the Trump administration of “sabotaging” the census. Recommended

The Georgetown letter calls on the Census Bureau to hire an outside cybersecurity firm to run an end-to-end audit on the bureau’s data security apparatus. The bureau says that it’s on it. One recent internal security presentation surveys how the bureau will manage cyberthreats ranging from compromised respondent devices to phishing scams—but it’s scant on details.

Preparation for the 2020 census started years ago, even before the 2010 census was conducted. But this next census will take place in an atmosphere of evolving national security threats, some of them very recent (and successful). The stakes could not be much higher.

“The census is a pretty foundational thing for our democracy,” Geltzer says. “The census is critical to voting in this country and how seats in the House and therefore how votes in the Electoral College get tallied and allocated. It’s almost hard not to be interested in it, if you’re interested in the law and the constitutional system and our democracy.” About the Author

Kriston Capps

Kriston Capps is a staff writer for CityLab covering housing, architecture, and politics. He previously worked as a senior editor for Architect magazine.

A ‘Game Of Thrones’ Thief And A Dam Hacker: These Are The FBI’s 41 Most-wanted Cyber Criminals

By Isobel Asher Hamilton

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), July 22, 2018

The FBI has 41 suspects on its “Cyber’s Most Wanted” page, an identity parade of some of the most skilled hackers in the world.

Their crimes range from state-sponsored espionage to holding episodes of “Game of Thrones,” and even hacking into a US dam. Although it is a distinct possibility that the hacker got the wrong dam.

Scroll on to read more about each of the suspects and the crimes they committed. They are not ranked in any particular order. Behzad Mesri, held HBO to ransom

Mesri is an Iran-based hacker otherwise known as

“

Skote Vahshat” who allegedly hacked HBO’s “Game of Thrones” and obtained unaired episodes, scripts, and plot outlines. He demanded a ransom of

\$6 million in Bitcoin. He also stole unaired episodes of “Ballers,” “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” and “The Deuce.”

Danial Jeloudar, stole a vast amount of credit card numbers

FBI

Jeloudar is wanted for identity theft and fraud after he and his associate,

Arash Amiri Abedian, allegedly used malware to steal a vast amount of credit card numbers and other personal information, and then used that information to extort money, goods, and services from victims.

Jeloudar tried to extort a California-based online merchant, threatening to disclose its customers’ credit card details and other personal information unless it made him a payment in Bitcoin.

Arash Amiri Abedian, stole and passed on bank details

Along with Danial Jeloudar, Abedian is wanted for alleged identity theft and fraud. Between 2011 and 2016, Abedian used malware to capture people’s credit card details and other personal information.

In February 2012, Abedian sent Jeloudar approximately 30,000 names and numbers, which he said were unauthorized credit card numbers and associated information.

Westmoreland Case Puts Spotlight On Protecting Children From Online Child Predators

By Mary Ann Thomas

[Valley \(PA\) News Dispatch](#), July 22, 2018

The case of a missing 15-year-old Westmoreland County girl who was found recently in Michigan brings the tally to 25 missing children from Western Pennsylvania who were alleged victims of violent crimes in the past year who were located by the FBI.

The caseload has almost doubled in just a year for the FBI’s Pittsburgh office of Violent Crimes Against Children Task Force, according to Chad Yarbrough, assistant special agent in charge of the FBI’s Pittsburgh office.

The task force investigates kidnapping, child pornography, luring children for illicit sex via the internet and sexual exploitation by traveling across state lines to have contact with children.

"I would like 100 more agents," said Yarbrough, who recently announced the addition of five agents.

Increases in crimes against children are a fact of life for a myriad of agencies fighting the scourge, among them the United Nations.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the nation's clearinghouse for child victimization, reports a recent "exponential increase" of a range of child victimization cases.

Adding to the perfect storm is a generation of digital natives who see no stigma with revealing personal information and posting risqué photographs of themselves on the internet and social media, said Michelle Spinelli, an education specialist with the Blackburn Center Against Domestic and Sexual Violence in Greensburg.

The Blackburn Center reports an increased demand since 2010 to add sexting to its high school internet safety programs, which are offered to public and private schools across Westmoreland County.

Upticks in the reporting of child exploitation crimes coupled with growing opportunities for child predators are fueling the surge in cases, according to Callahan Walsh, a spokesman for National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

"Social media platforms and social media apps give predators a private hunting preserve where they can use anonymity to hunt children," he said.

The internet continues to be a hotbed of opportunity for child pornography, sexual assault and sex trafficking.

"These are the toughest cases to work," Yarbrough said. "They are mentally draining, obviously, because children are involved, and they are very innocent.

"A lot of times, they are at ages when they are starting to learn about their sexuality and are preyed upon."

How it happens

It's harder to abduct a child in person than to entice them online, groom them and lure them away from home.

That's what happened to the Westmoreland County teenager, according to Walsh.

"The exploiter will promise love, and the children will soak up the attention," he said.

"These children think they are meeting a new boyfriend," Walsh said, "and within a few weeks, they are working for their stay."

Oftentimes, the predators insinuate them into their lives, offering whatever they need — security, love, money — Yarbrough said.

Newer apps such as Kik provide anonymous transmissions, "allowing predators to hide," Yarbrough said. "And they can portray to be whomever they want."

Nudity is OK?

The Blackburn Center presents programs on safe internet conduct for elementary and high school students in Westmoreland County.

An important concept is teaching young children to identify what is personal information, Spinelli said.

"Beyond their name and date of birth, they must also consider personal information such as check-ins at restaurants and sites where they visit — anything that identifies them as an individual is personal information," she said.

Upper elementary school students learn the risks of gaming systems and chat rooms.

If a player they don't know starts asking personal questions, kids should report it to adults, she advised.

"The reality is: If it seems weird and it feels weird, it probably is weird, and they should go tell an adult," she said.

For older students, there's been an increase in school requests for lessons on the implications of "sexting" — sending explicit texts and photos involving nudity.

She reminds teenagers of the laws involved in sending nude photos and its classification as pornography.

"We turn it around on the kids and ask if this is a big deal," said Spinelli.

"It's not a big deal for them to show nudity in a photo, especially at the high school level," she said, "and they wonder why it's a big deal with their parents."

The upperclassmen tell Spinelli it's their body and their decision to send a nude photo or not.

"Then we come in and say, 'Wait a minute — just because you are sending this to Larry, you are not guaranteed that Larry won't send it to his 30 friends.'"

Spinelli likes to remind students that if a couple includes someone who is 16 years old and the other is 18, there could be a legal issue with exchanging personal nude photographs.

"Charges such as possession of child pornography can be pressed — that's when their eyes get real big," she said.

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TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

Confessed 9/11 Co-conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui On Hunger Strike At Federal Supermax Prison In Colorado Claims He's A Victim Of Religious "Torture"

By Kirk Mitchell

[Denver Post](#), July 20, 2018

The reputed 20th hijacker in the 9/11 terror attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. recently sent three letters to a Denver federal magistrate judge declaring he's on a hunger strike because of religious persecution by the FBI as part of a conspiracy to hide U.S. and Saudi Arabian ties to the terror attacks.

Zacarias Moussaoui sent the letters this week from his high security cell at Administrative Maximum U.S. Penitentiary in Florence to U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Hegarty at Denver U.S. District Court claiming he started the hunger strike on June 22. Undated booking mug shot from the Sherburne County, Minnesota sheriff's office of Zacarias Moussaoui.

Moussaoui, a French citizen, began each of his hand-written letters with the proclamation, "In the name of Allah." Beneath his name on each letter he also referred to himself as the "so-called 20th terrorist." The letters, written July 10, were filed in federal court Thursday.

Moussaoui, who is serving six life prison sentences, confessed he was part of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist plot and had been planning to fly a fifth plane into the White House. He was arrested less than a month before the attacks on Aug. 16, 2001 on a minor immigration charge. FBI agents questioned him about why he was taking lessons on how to fly a jumbo jet.

The terrorist is one of 400 federal inmates including "Unabomber" Theodore J. Kaczynski and 1993 World Trade center bomber Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, held in the highest security prison in the federal system, often called the Alcatraz of the Rockies.

In his letters to the judge, Moussaoui wrote that prison officials took away a large clock from his H cell block to prevent the devout Muslim from praying five times a day. Denying him his right to pray in a timely manner amounted to religious "torture."

Moussaoui wrote that the FBI also instigated a special restriction only against him by limiting his purchases to \$10, preventing him from buying a watch and proper winter clothing so he could go outside for recreation.

The sanction was intended to "break me psychologically," one of the letters says. Federal authorities have also denied him a lawyer, he said.

CIA, FBI, U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Bureau of Prisons officials are conspiring to cover up a conspiracy between U.S. agents from the FBI and CIA with the Saudi Arabian royal family, (Osama) Bin Laden, former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and a long list of terrorists connected to the 9/11 terror attacks, Moussaoui wrote. He does not explain the "collusion" in the letters.

"Once again I petition you to be in protective custody against the CIA, FBI, DOJ, BOP," Moussaoui wrote in a post script at the end of one of the letters to Judge Hegarty. In the same letter, the Al Qaeda militant claims to have information about the "cover-up on the U.S.S. Cole bombing." Again, he didn't elaborate about what the cover-up entailed.

On Oct. 12, 2000, two suicide bombers steered a small fiberglass boat carrying C4 explosives into the USS Cole while it was being refueled in Yemen's Aden harbor, killing 17 sailors and injuring 39.

Suspected ISIS Fighter Ibraheem Musaibli Tricked Into Traveling To Syria

By Robert Snell And Sarah Rahal

[Detroit News](#), July 20, 2018

Dearborn — A Dearborn man captured on an Islamic State battlefield this month was tricked by fellow Muslims into traveling overseas and became trapped in war-torn Syria, his brother said Friday.

Relatives, public records and legal experts helped establish a narrative timeline of Ibraheem Musaibli's final months in the United States, his alleged attempts to escape an Islamic State prison with help from the FBI and potential prosecution in a high-profile criminal case in Detroit. The chronology emerged Friday, one day after it was revealed the Dearborn native had been captured by Coalition-backed forces in Syria while believed to be fighting for the Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

Musaibli, 28, is no terrorist but was lured by fellow Muslims into coming to Syria to study religion and work, younger brother Abdullah Musaibli told The Detroit News on Friday via Facebook Messenger.

"My brother is the best person in the world, however he is very trusting in other Muslims like him," Abdullah Musaibli, 26, of New York City, wrote. "That is why he is in this situation, because other 'Muslims' tricked him into coming to Syria to study religion and work. He had NO idea this group was ISIS."

Abdullah Musaibli said he last communicated with his brother two months ago.

"Me being a Muslim, I despise ISIS and all terrorists with all my heart, because they give Islam a very bad name," he wrote. "Islam is a religion of peace and what they are doing in the Middle East is despicable."

Ibraheem Musaibli is being held at an undisclosed overseas facility but is expected to return to the U.S. as early as next week. He is being detained along with an Indiana woman whose husband was an Islamic State member, according to The New York Times.

Musaibli is believed to be only the second American man captured while fighting on behalf of the Islamic State, and he presents one of the first times the Trump administration could use federal courts to prosecute a returning foreign fighter.

Though Musaibli was captured overseas, he could be prosecuted in Detroit, the federal jurisdiction which covers his hometown of Dearborn, said Peter Henning, a Wayne State University law professor and former federal prosecutor. The Times reported that it is likely Musaibli has been charged in a sealed federal court filing.

"We're not going to have any issues of entrapment or that the government somehow acted unfairly in targeting him. He was on the battlefield," Henning said. "It's much easier when it's a black-and-white case."

The Justice Department in Detroit has experience prosecuting people on terrorism-related charges. Underwear bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was sentenced to life in federal prison for the failed Christmas Day 2009 terror attack aboard a Detroit-bound airliner, and Detroit resident Sebastian Gregerson, an Islamic State "soldier" accused of plotting violent jihad, was sentenced last year to 45 months in federal prison.

Abdulmutallab and Gregerson were represented by the Federal Defender Office, though Abdulmutallab later defended himself with assistance from a court-appointed attorney.

Miriam Siefer, head of the Federal Defender Office, said she has not been contacted about Musaibli.

"We haven't been appointed yet," she told The News. "If he needs court-appointed counsel, then we will represent him."

Abdullah Musaibli said he doesn't know if his brother has a lawyer but has been trying to find out, fearing Ibraheem will be questioned by law enforcement without representation. His father, Izzy Musaibli, told The News late Friday they're in dire need of legal representation.

The Program on Extremism at George Washington University has identified 71 Americans who have traveled either to Syria or Iraq to wage jihad. At least 24 of those American citizens have been killed. The status

of 29 people is unknown while the rest have either returned to the U.S. or are in jail.

"On average, individuals who actually reach Syria or Iraq to join jihadist groups receive lighter sentences than those who get arrested on the way to the airport to travel," said Seamus Hughes, the extremism program's deputy director. "It seems counterintuitive, but they tend to have information to trade, a window into the terrorist organization structure."

From Dearborn to Yemen

Ibraheem Musaibli lived a low-key life in Dearborn. An Edsel Ford High School dropout, Musaibli helped his father operate a perfume shop in Detroit and had no contact with police besides a few minor traffic incidents, according to the Dearborn Police.

"My brother Ibraheem has always been a joking, lovable person," Abdullah Musaibli wrote. "Even after he became religious, he would still joke and laugh with friends and family. He loved to watch TV shows and movies and enjoyed oldies music."

In 2010, Ibraheem Musaibli bought a \$32,900 brick bungalow on Riverside Drive on the city's eastern boundary with Detroit, within walking distance of the American Moslem Society mosque.

Eventually, he got married, fathered a son and moved to the port city of Aden, Yemen.

Before leaving, Musaibli attended to trivial personal tasks. He added brother Yousif Musaibli and sister Sumaya Musaibli to the deed on his home in January 2015; two months later, he renewed his driver's license, according to Wayne County and state records.

While in Yemen, Ibraheem Musaibli started talking with fellow Muslims, his brother said, who lured him to Syria in 2015.

Ibraheem Musaibli did not watch online sermons by radical Islamic clerics or seek out Islamic State contacts, his brother said.

"No, he just reads Quran and prays five times a day like any other Muslim," Abdullah Musaibli wrote. "My brother would never hurt anyone."

Two years later, in January 2017, while Ibraheem Musaibli was believed to be in Syria, his signature appears on a quit claim deed that gave the home to his siblings.

Abdullah Musaibli, declined to comment about his brother transferring the house but told The News that Ibraheem Musaibli did intend on returning to the U.S. and is not an ISIS fighter.

Abdullah Musaibli said he hopes to be able to speak with his brother upon his arrival to the United States.

"I love him more than my life," he said. "I'll do anything for my brother."

Musaibli's travel to Syria, and reported ties to the Islamic State, are rare but not unprecedented locally.

Michiganians in Syria

In 2016, federal agents were hunting for Flushing native Mohamed Maleeh Masha, 24, a suburban Flint medical school graduate who had fled to Syria and was believed to be working as a doctor for Islamic State extremists.

The Masha manhunt was revealed in a sealed federal search warrant that was briefly posted on the federal court online case database and obtained exclusively by The News.

The records indicated the FBI was looking for evidence Masha was supporting Islamic State groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria — known as ISIS.

Nicole Lynn Mansfield, a 33-year-old nurse from Flint, was killed in 2013 in Syria. She reportedly threw a grenade at Syrian soldiers who opened fire on her vehicle.

Musaibli, meanwhile, sent text messages to relatives after leaving Yemen confirming that he was joining the Islamic State, The Times reported, citing two unnamed officials familiar with the investigation.

Musaibli eventually became disillusioned after arriving in Syria, however, and his family tried to negotiate a way out with the FBI, according to the newspaper.

The FBI offered to return Musaibli to the United States if he surrendered. He refused, and negotiations stalled, the newspaper reported.

Izzy Musaibli claims that the prior reports were false and the FBI has been working to help his son escape from an Islamic State prison.

"He's not a fighter, he's been working with the FBI to escape ISIS and after the last time he tried to escape, (ISIS) burned his passport," Izzy Musaibli said. "The FBI knows he's not a fighter and he's only been doing small work there for food to survive."

Izzy Musaibli said the family had brief contact with Ibraheem while he was stuck in Syria, trapped because the militants thought Ibraheem was a spy.

"(ISIS) doesn't represent Islam, they have a totally different ideology, and Ibraheem was preaching against them," he said. "Every time he tried to escape, he was put back in prison, and we've been working with the FBI as a team."

A spokesman for the FBI in Detroit declined to comment Friday on Izzy Musaibli's claims.

Ibraheem Musaibli's sister, Fatima Musaibli, who lives with her parents in a nearby home on Riverside Drive, said it would be uncharacteristic for him to join the Islamic State.

"Ibraheem wouldn't do this," she told The News late Thursday. "He's not violent and not the type to join such a group. We worry for him."

FBI agents searched the family's home nine days ago, Fatima Musaibli said.

"They took our phones, laptops, my brother's old passports, a box full of stuff and said they would return it soon, but it's been more than a week," she said.

It is unclear when the FBI started investigating Ibraheem Musaibli.

Sealed federal court records in Detroit indicate FBI agents were investigating a man with a similar last name last year.

In January 2017, FBI agents served a search warrant on Facebook information for an account belonging to Abu Abdul Rahman Al-Musibli. The still-active account lists several friends with the last name Musaibli, including one woman in Dearborn.

The next month, in February 2017, the FBI received 820 pages of information from the man's account, according to a copy of the search warrant return obtained by The News.

Abdullah Musaibli declined comment about the Facebook account Friday and if it belonged to his brother.

Little known locally

Ibraheem Musaibli was a relative unknown within the broader Muslim community in Metro Detroit, which has about 300,000 members, one of the largest concentrations in the U.S., said Dawud Walid, executive director of the Michigan chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Walid said Musaibli's family did not approach CAIR for assistance in helping him return to the U.S.; however, Izzy Musaibli said they've tried to contact CAIR numerous times for assistance.

"I am not familiar with this individual and I am not familiar with anyone from this area being apprehended for trying to join ISIS or having some reservations and trying to give himself up," Walid said Friday.

Walid has concerns about Musaibli being prosecuted if he had tried to leave the terror group.

"This is the flaw in the federal government's so-called countering violent extremism program," Walid said. "The community needs to be involved in prevention or de-radicalization but there is no mechanism for someone who gets into trouble to get them some sort of reformatory help."

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Staff Writer Blake Alsup contributed.

Man Arrested With Knives Near UK Parliament Jailed For Life

By Stephen Addison

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

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Families Flee As Taliban Battle Islamic State In Northern Afghanistan

By Matin Sahak

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Counterterrorism Lessons From Paris, After This Week's World Cup Celebrations | Opinion

By Marisa Porges

[Philly \(PA\)](#), July 20, 2018

PARIS — On the streets of Paris, police are breathing a sigh of relief.

The two-year anniversary of the Nice terrorist attack, when a man associated with the Islamic State killed 86 people and injured 434 by driving a truck into large crowds watching Bastille Day fireworks, passed without incident. This despite massive parades and public gatherings across France, in honor of last weekend's national holiday and the French soccer team's World Cup win.

For the hundreds of thousands celebrating in central Paris, the World Cup victory parade was a reminder of how a city and country can recover from a series of deadly terrorist attacks that have killed 246 people all told. For those watching from across the Atlantic, it provided lessons for how to effectively respond to the sorts of terrorist attacks that have become more and more common over the past three years.

First, the celebrations showcased protective measures that Paris, London, and other European cities are taking to better secure open spaces most vulnerable to terrorist attacks – the parks, town centers, pedestrian pathways, and public squares that are “soft targets” for car bombs or drivers intent on hitting pedestrians. Security perimeters have been extended around major tourist sites like the Eiffel Tower, limiting access and protecting these gathering spaces for pedestrians. When I walk into a park, I must now sidestep a metal bollard, large concrete flowerpots, or similar blockades, placed at

the entrance to prevent a car from driving into the open spaces.

It's also hard to miss the CCTV cameras that, more and more, monitor passersby on any given street to detect suspicious behavior. Unmanned camera drones also conduct aerial surveillance at major public events, like the recent parade, scanning the crowd for bad actors and helping security officials track suspect activity as it unfolds. This use of advanced technology has become more commonplace in European cities.

For example, the combination of CCTV, facial recognition technology, and big data analytics helped police to identify, capture, and recently prosecute a Taliban-linked Briton who was plotting an attack at government offices in central London. He was caught after a video feed spotted him performing reconnaissance while carrying three large knives.

Alongside these physical and technological measures, increased joint operations between local police and military forces are noticeable. For Bastille Day celebrations, 12,000 police and gendarmes were on duty around Paris, with an additional 2,000 soldiers deployed to the streets for Operation Sentinelle, the military's domestic security effort since the 2015 terrorist attacks struck Paris, including at a soccer stadium and a concert hall. And I wasn't surprised to hear that plans to further align military and civilian counterterrorism efforts were a key aspect of 32 new measures just announced by French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe.

But what happens when we apply these ideas in the United States? How can we physically harden public spaces, given the sheer geographic expanse of our major cities? While important, it will take years – and, ultimately, be impossible – to secure every large public gathering area and pedestrian spaces in our major cities.

Technological fixes are likewise problematic. Even as our cities have started to expand the scope of surveillance efforts beyond visual monitoring, courts are still debating how the Fourth Amendment's protection against “unreasonable searches” should apply.

Improving collaboration between military and local police, and among federal, state, and city security forces, may be the biggest hurdle of all. The FBI now has Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) in 104 cities nationwide, to enhance coordination among more than 500 state and local agencies and 55 federal agencies. But with almost 17,000 law enforcement agencies across the United States, continued focus on information-sharing and expanded joint training efforts remain critical – and there is no simple solution.

Which is why the most important lesson from Paris is something that's largely unspoken among the locals: Even as increased security efforts become the norm,

daily life goes on largely unchanged. Public parties thrive. Parades – and, yes, protests – continue. No one stays home out of fear or security concern. Precautions are taken to better protect public spaces, to better use technology to monitor bad actors, and to help security forces and first responders work effectively together. But a spirit of resilience ensures that these security measures do not hamper everyday life. Or dampen special moments, like a spectacular World Cup celebration.

That's the best lesson of all.

Marisa Porges is head of school at the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr and a former counterterrorism policy adviser in the Bush and Obama administrations.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

U.S. Lawmakers Cut Anti-ZTE Measure From Must-Pass Defense Bill

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Senate Republicans Drop Bid To Block Trump From Helping Chinese Telecom Giant ZTE

By Erica Werner

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

Senate Republicans have dropped their attempt to reimpose U.S. sanctions on the Chinese telecommunications giant ZTE, lawmakers said Friday, a victory for President Trump as congressional Republicans abandoned a rare effort to thwart his agenda.

The retreat means ZTE, a company found guilty of selling U.S. goods to Iran in violation of sanctions, will duck Commerce Department penalties that bar U.S. companies from doing business with it. U.S. and Chinese officials had said those penalties would effectively put ZTE out of business.

Trump had ordered his own Commerce Department to lift the penalties as part of a broader negotiating strategy with Chinese President Xi Jinping, but senators voted to reimpose them as part of a sweeping defense policy bill they passed last month.

But the House version of the defense bill did not include the same provision. And senators have now decided to leave it out of the final compromise bill, agreeing to language advanced by the House instead. The House language bars government contractors from

doing business with ZTE but allows the company to continue doing business with private U.S. firms.

The final version of the defense bill is expected to come to a vote in the House and Senate in coming days.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) blasted the decision in a statement Friday.

"By stripping the Senate's tough ZTE sanctions provision from the defense bill, President Trump – and the congressional Republicans who acted at his behest – have once again made President Xi and the Chinese government the big winners and the American worker and our national security the big losers," Schumer said.

According to Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who was among the lawmakers pushing for a tough stance on ZTE, the cave on that issue was connected to a deal on language bolstering the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., or CFIUS.

CFIUS is an interagency committee that reviews deals between foreign investors and U.S. businesses for potential threats to national security. Lawmakers including Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), the No. 2 Senate Republican, have been pushing to broaden its purview so it could have greater ability to block transactions with Chinese companies that could pose national security risks to the U.S.

Lawmakers have now agreed to include the expansion in the final compromise version of the National Defense Authorization Act. The changes would allow CFIUS to intervene in more cases, not just when a foreign entity is poised to take control of a U.S. company, as is now the case. Terms of the CFIUS deal were first reported by the Wall Street Journal and confirmed Friday by Cornyn's office.

But Rubio denounced what he called a tradeoff of ZTE for CFIUS.

"This deal on #CFIUS is good news. The bad news? They had to cave on #ZTE in order to get it. So chances that a #China controlled telecomm will not just stay in business, but do so here inside the U.S. sadly just went up. #BadTradeoff," Rubio wrote Friday on Twitter.

ZTE had been accused of making illegal shipments of U.S. goods to Iran and North Korea in defiance of U.S. sanctions and lying about its response, and the Commerce Department announced in April that the Chinese company would be banned for seven years from buying American technology. The Commerce move met with bipartisan applause, with Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) welcoming it as the "death penalty" for the Chinese firm.

The next month, Trump took GOP lawmakers and members of his own administration by surprise when he announced that he was working with the Chinese

president to help ZTE, writing on Twitter, "Too many jobs in China lost."

In lieu of the "denial order" that would prevent ZTE from buying U.S. products from companies such as the chipmaker Qualcomm, the Trump administration announced plans to require ZTE to pay a large fine, replace its entire board of directors and fund a new in-house compliance team staffed by U.S. experts. Rubio and other senators viewed that as little more than a slap on the wrist.

And Trump's concession did little to move Beijing on broader trade negotiations, as the United States and China have hit each other with tariffs on billions of imported goods and are threatening to impose more.

Republicans Bow To White House On Chinese Telecom Firm ZTE

By Ana Swanson

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

Republican lawmakers backed away from a plan to reinstate stiff penalties on Chinese telecom firm ZTE, handing a win to President Trump, who had personally intervened to save the Beijing company.

Congressional leaders removed a provision, tucked into a military policy bill, that would have stopped the Trump administration from lifting penalties on ZTE. Rather than prevent the company from buying American technology, the bill will simply limit federal purchases of ZTE products, such as handsets.

The move drew swift criticism from lawmakers who had pushed for a tougher approach to ZTE, which was found guilty in 2016 of violating American sanctions on Iran and North Korea.

"Despite bipartisan support to put American national security before jobs in China, the Republican leadership refused to take any real, substantive action on ZTE. Instead, they joined President Trump in bowing to Beijing," said Senator Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat. "It's weak and shameful."

Most Americans have never heard of ZTE but it has become a Ping-Pong ball in diplomatic and economic negotiations between the United States and China. The company's future became an issue ahead of Mr. Trump's summit with North Korea's leader, which China was helping to facilitate.

In April, the government banned ZTE from buying American technology for seven years as punishment for failing to rectify issues related to its sanctions violation. The move threatened to put ZTE, which buys a large quantity of semiconductors from San Diego-based Qualcomm, out of business.

President Xi Jinping of China appealed personally to Mr. Trump to save the company and Mr. Trump obliged. The Commerce Department announced June 7 that it would lift the ban, in return for the Chinese company paying a \$1 billion fine, replacing its board and senior leadership, and embedding a compliance team handpicked by the United States inside its company. Wilbur Ross, the secretary of commerce, said the penalty was the strictest ever levied by the agency's Bureau of Industry and Security.

The legislation in Congress does contain text to expand the authority of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which reviews foreign deals for security threats. And it also bolsters the system the United States uses to monitor the technologies that are exported abroad. Republican congressional leaders confirmed on Thursday that the House and Senate had reached a deal on the investment provisions.

"This deal on #CFIUS is good news," Senator Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, wrote in a Twitter post on Friday. "The bad news? They had to cave on #ZTE in order to get it. So chances that a #China controlled telecomm will not just stay in business, but do so here inside the U.S. sadly just went up. #BadTradeoff."

In recent months, the president and other members of the administration have met with congressional leaders to try to persuade them to temper their restrictions on ZTE. In May, Mr. Ross and Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, were both dispatched to Capitol Hill, where they tried to convince Republicans that punishing ZTE could hurt trade talks with the Chinese and the summit between Mr. Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong-un. In June, Republican lawmakers returned to the White House for another meeting that touched on the company's future.

One of the administration's most vocal congressional defenders has been David Perdue, a Republican senator from Georgia. In early June, he said the Congressional provision would "trample on the separation of powers" and undercut the Trump administration's ability to negotiate.

But a trade deal with the Chinese has proved elusive. The Trump administration has levied tough penalties on China, including tariffs on billions of dollars of products, in a bid to force China to open up its markets to American companies, reduce its trade surplus with the United States and stop what the White House labels intellectual property theft.

While China has offered to purchase more American products and lower some barriers to foreign companies, White House officials have so far rejected

these offers as insufficient and pushed ahead with imposing tariffs on \$34 billion of Chinese goods.

The president vowed in an interview with CNBC on Thursday to double down on the strategy, saying he was “ready” to expand the tariffs to cover the entirety of what China imports into the United States in an effort to convince the Chinese to bend.

In a statement Friday, Chuck Schumer, the Senate’s Democratic leader, said that the administration and Congressional Republicans had “once again made President Xi and the Chinese Government the big winners.”

Mr. Trump, Mr. Schumer said, “has once again broken his core promise to be tough on China simply to please the president of China — and he got nothing in return.”

Congress To Leave Trump’s Deal With China’s ZTE Untouched

By Jenny Leonard, Erik Wasson
[Bloomberg News](#), July 20, 2018

U.S. lawmakers will allow President Donald Trump’s deal with China’s ZTE Corp. to remain in place, agreeing to a key Chinese demand in the broader trade dispute between the two largest economies, three sources familiar with the matter said.

Negotiators from the Senate and House of Representatives late Thursday agreed to abandon efforts to reinstate harsher sanctions against the Chinese telecommunications-equipment maker as part of the defense policy bill, the people said. Both chambers are expected to vote on the National Defense Authorization Act next week.

Draft language advanced in the House earlier this year focused on a procurement ban for ZTE products, whereas the Senate approved language that would reinstate the sales ban for U.S. companies to sell to ZTE. The White House strongly opposed any efforts by Congress to block its deal for ZTE to resume business. ZTE Ban

The Trump administration in April announced a seven-year ban on U.S. exports to ZTE after it said the company violated sanctions agreements by selling American technology to Iran and North Korea. The move forced ZTE to announce it was shutting down.

Trump reversed course in May, saying he was reconsidering penalties on ZTE as a personal favor to Chinese President Xi Jinping. Later that month, his administration announced it would allow the company to stay in business after paying a new fine, changing its management and providing “high-level security guarantees.”

Following through on the promise, the Commerce Department last week lifted a ban on American firms selling products to ZTE after the company paid the final tranche of a \$1.4 billion penalty by placing \$400 million in escrow at a U.S. bank. Congresspeople from both parties had blasted the Trump administration for helping ZTE.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, a national security hawk who was pushing for the sales ban to remain in place, said a Congressional deal on legislation to tighten restrictions on foreign investment into the U.S. came at the cost of backing down on ZTE.

Late Tuesday, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Republican lawmakers reached a deal to bolster the existing review process for the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., or Cfius, an inter-agency panel that examines foreign investment for security concerns. If the agreement holds, the legislation may be attached to the NDAA bill.

“This deal on #CFIUS is good news. The bad news? They had to cave on #ZTE in order to get it,” Rubio said Friday on Twitter. “So chances that a #China controlled telecomm will not just stay in business, but do so here inside the U.S. sadly just went up. #BadTradeoff.”

Senator Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat, who sponsored the original language to reinstate the sales ban on ZTE, said the final outcome is “weak and shameful.”

“Despite bipartisan support to put American national security before jobs in China, the Republican leadership refused to take any real, substantive action on ZTE,” Van Hollen said in a statement. “Instead, they joined President Trump in bowing to Beijing. It’s weak and shameful.”

China had demanded the ZTE issue be addressed by the Trump administration during high level trade talks in May and June to avert a trade war. Those talks have broken down and the conflict has since escalated as Trump administration slapped tariffs on \$34 billion of Chinese goods, inviting retaliation from China. Trump on Friday threatened to impose duties on all Chinese imports to the U.S., which were valued at about \$500 billion last year.

China Is Waging A “Quiet Kind Of Cold War” Against The U.S., Says CIA Official

[CBS News](#), July 21, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. – China is waging a “quiet kind of cold war” against the United States, using all its resources to try to replace America as the leading power in the world, a top CIA expert on Asia said Friday. Beijing

doesn't want to go to war, he said, but the current communist government, under President Xi Jinping, is subtly working on multiple fronts to undermine the U.S. in ways that are different than the more well-publicized activities being employed by Russia.

"I would argue ... that what they're waging against us is fundamentally a cold war – a cold war not like we saw during THE Cold War (between the U.S. and the Soviet Union) but a cold war by definition," Michael Collins, deputy assistant director of the CIA's East Asia mission center, said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

Rising U.S.-China tension goes beyond the trade dispute playing out in a tariff tit-for-tat between the two nations.

There is concern over China's pervasive efforts to steal business secrets and details about high-tech research being conducted in the U.S. The Chinese military is expanding and being modernized and the U.S., as well as other nations, have complained about China's construction of military outposts on islands in the South China Sea.

"I would argue that it's the Crimea of the East," Collins said, referring to Russia's brash annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, which was condemned throughout the West.

Collins' comments track warnings about China's rising influence issued by others who spoke earlier this week at the security conference. The alarm bells come at a time when Washington needs China's help in ending its nuclear standoff with North Korea.

On Wednesday, FBI Director Christopher Wray said China, from a counterintelligence perspective, represents the broadest and most significant threat America faces. He said the FBI has economic espionage investigations in all 50 states that can be traced back to China.

"The volume of it. The pervasiveness of it. The significance of it is something that I think this country cannot underestimate," Wray said.

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats also warned of rising Chinese aggression. In particular, he said, the U.S. must stand strong against China's effort to steal business secrets and academic research.

Susan Thornton, acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said increasing the public's awareness about the activities of the hundreds of thousands of Chinese students or groups at U.S. universities could be one way to help mitigate potential damage.

"China is not just a footnote to what we're dealing with with Russia," Thornton said.

Marcel Lettre, former undersecretary of defense for intelligence, said China has the second-largest defense budget in the world, the largest standing army of ground forces, the third-largest air force and a navy of 300 ships and more than 60 submarines.

"All of this is in the process of being modernized and upgraded," said Lettre, who sat on a panel with Collins and Thornton.

He said China also is pursuing advances in cyber, artificial intelligence, engineering and technology, counter-space, anti-satellite capabilities and hypersonic glide weapons. Army Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told a congressional committee earlier this year that China is developing long-range cruise missiles – some capable of reaching supersonic speeds.

"The Pentagon has noted that the Chinese have already pursued a test program that has had 20 times more tests than the U.S. has," Lettre said.

Franklin Miller, former senior director for defense policy and arms control at the National Security Council, said China's weapons developments are emphasizing the need to have a dialogue with Beijing.

"We need to try to engage," Miller said. "My expectations for successful engagement are medium-low, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try."

Senior CIA Official: China Threatens US Interests 'Far More Significantly By Any Extreme' Than The Russians

By Ryan Pickrell

[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

A senior CIA official warned of the dangers of China's rise Friday, stressing that Beijing is determined to see China replace the U.S. as the world superpower.

Arguing that China is fundamentally waging a "cold war" against the U.S., Deputy Assistant Director for the CIA's East Asia Mission Center Michael Collins indirectly described China as a "country that exploits all avenues of power — licit and illicit, public and private, economic and military — to undermine the standing of [its] rival relative to [its] own standing without resorting to conflict."

"At the end of the day, they want every country around the world, when it's deciding its interests on policy issues, to first and foremost side with China and not the United States, because the Chinese are increasingly defining a conflict with the United States and what we stand behind as a systems conflict," he argued at the Aspen Security Forum.

Emphasizing that China represents the greatest challenge to American interests, he stressed that Chinese ambitions set "up a competition with us and

what we stand behind far more significantly by any extreme than what the Russians could put forward.”

His statements echo those of FBI Director Christopher Wray, who spoke at the Aspen Security Forum a few days earlier.

While he acknowledged the seriousness of the threat from Russia, which he called “the most aggressive actor” in its efforts to influence “public opinion, our politicians, our business community,” Wray said that China is “the most significant threat we face as a country.” China is “trying to position itself as the sole dominant superpower. They’re trying to replace the United States in that role,” he explained, “I think China from a counterintelligence perspective represents in many ways represents the broadest, most challenging, most significant threat we face as a country.”

Through China’s Belt and Road initiative, Made in China 2025 plan, militarization of the South China Sea, aggressive trade practices, and extensive espionage operations, among others, Beijing appears to be advancing its interests at the expense of others, the U.S. in particular, to achieve dominance in its sphere of influence and beyond.

Before leaving his position as head of what is now U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to become the ambassador to South Korea, Adm. Harry Harris warned that China, not Russia or any other country, stands as the greatest long-term threat to American interests.

“North Korea remains our most imminent threat and a nuclear-capable North Korea with missiles that can reach the United States is unacceptable,” he said in late May. “China remains our biggest long-term challenge. Without focused involvement and engagement by the United States and our allies and partners China will realize its dream of hegemony in Asia.”

The Chinese foreign ministry responded by accusing the U.S. of being “obsessed with hegemony.”

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sounded the alarms last year, when he was still serving as the head of the CIA, about the threat posed by Beijing.

“I think China has the capacity to present the greatest rivalry to America of any of those over the medium and long term,” he said, “If you look at them, they are probably trying either to steal our stuff, or make sure they can defeat it.” He added that in many cases, it’s both.

China Waging New ‘Cold War’ To Topple U.S. As World’s Leading Superpower, Says CIA Official

By Tom Porter

[Newsweek](#), July 22, 2018

China is waging a “cold war” against the U.S. and trying to displace it as the world’s leading superpower, a top CIA official said Saturday.

Michael Collins, the deputy assistant director of the CIA’s East Asia Mission Center, told the Aspen Security Forum that the threat from China was the most serious currently face by the U.S.

“It sets up a competition with us and what we stand behind far more significantly by any extreme than what the Russians could put forward,” Collins said, reported The Associated Press.

He said Beijing’s tactics fit the definition of a cold war: “I would argue ... that what they’re waging against us is fundamentally a cold war—a cold war not like we saw during the Cold War (between the U.S. and the Soviet Union) but a cold war by definition.”

“A country that exploits all avenues of power licit and illicit, public and private, economic and military, to undermine the standing of your rival relative to your own standing without resorting to conflict.”

Collins said that the ultimate goal of Beijing was to have “every country in the world” side with Chinese over U.S. interests.

His comments echo those of other U.S. intelligence chiefs, who earlier warned of the challenge posed by China’s bid for global influence.

On Wednesday, FBI director Christopher Wray told the conference that China was the most significant threat faced by the agency, and that it was investigating economic espionage operations by China in all 50 states.

“The volume of it. The pervasiveness of it. The significance of it is something that I think this country cannot underestimate,” Wray said, reported CNBC News.

“And I say that because for them it is a whole of state effort. It is economic espionage as well as traditional espionage; it is nontraditional collectors as well as traditional intelligence operatives; it’s human sources as well as cyber means.”

Collins comments come amid an escalating trade dispute between the U.S. and China, with President Donald Trump on Friday threatening to slap tariffs on all \$505 billion of Chinese imports to the U.S.

Beijing and Washington have also clashed over disputed territory in the South China Sea claimed by China.

CIA Official: China Wants To Replace US As World Superpower

By Jamie Tarabay

[CNN](#), July 20, 2018

Aspen, Colorado (CNN)The goal of China's influence operations around the world is to replace the United States as the world's leading superpower, the CIA's Michael Collins said Friday.

Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum during a session on the rise of China, Collins, the deputy assistant director of the CIA's East Asia Mission Center, said Chinese President Xi Jinping and his regime are waging a "cold war" against the US.

"By their own terms and what Xi enunciates I would argue by definition what they're waging against us is fundamentally a cold war, a cold war not like we saw during the Cold War, but a cold war by definition. A country that exploits all avenues of power licit and illicit, public and private, economic and military, to undermine the standing of your rival relative to your own standing without resorting to conflict. The Chinese do not want conflict," Collins said.

"At the end of the day they want every country around the world, when it's deciding its interests on policy issues, to first and foremost side with China and not the United States, because the Chinese are increasingly defining a conflict with the United States and what we stand behind as a systems conflict."

By looking at the writings of Xi, whose "thought" or world view was recently enshrined in China's constitution, it's clear, Collins says, that the threat China presents is the greatest global challenge the US currently faces.

"It sets up a competition with us and what we stand behind far more significantly by any extreme than what the Russians could put forward," Collins said.

Pentagon says China spying on military exercises

Collins' comments on the third day of the forum echoed those of other senior US officials there, including FBI Director Christopher Wray and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, who both pointed to China as the most significant danger for the US today.

"I think China, from a counterintelligence perspective, in many ways represents the broadest, most challenging, most significant threat we face as a country," Wray had told his audience on Wednesday.

"And I say that because for them it is a whole of state effort. It is economic espionage as well as traditional espionage; it is nontraditional collectors as well as traditional intelligence operatives; it's human sources as well as cyber means."

Coats said Thursday that the US needed to decide if China was a "true adversary or a legitimate competitor." He criticized Chinese state efforts to steal business secrets and academic research. "I think that's where we begin to draw the line," he said.

China's growing defense posture

Marcel Lettre, a former undersecretary of defense for intelligence, said that influence operations – in which the ruling Communist Party uses political, financial and military strategies to establish and solidify its presence in countries in its region and beyond – were only one tool China deploys as part of a larger effort to expand and grow.

"It's a country that has the second largest global defense budget, the largest standing army of ground forces, the third largest air force in the world, a navy of 300 ships – including more than 60 subs – all of this is in the process of being modernized and upgraded," he said, adding that those upgrades were "oriented around the innovations we've been taking on the US side for the last decade or two."

China unveiled its first homegrown carrier, a 50,000-ton ship, in May. The carrier's maiden sea trial followed a speech by Xi on April 12 in which he announced plans to build a "world-class" navy under the banner of the Chinese Communist Party. While the new carrier will enhance China's military power in the region, experts said it was still outdated and lagged far behind the standard of American aircraft carriers.

Trump readies new tariffs on China

At the same time, China has established ports along the Indian Ocean that extend to Djibouti, where last year it dispatched two warships carrying an undisclosed number of troops to its first overseas military base.

Susan Thornton, who serves as the acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, pointed to the impasse in the South China Sea as an area where the US presence might press Beijing to negotiate with other nations in the region that claim territory in the disputed waters.

In recent years, the Chinese government has built a number of artificial islands in the South China Sea with military installations, including radar facilities and airstrips. Beijing asserts that much of the South China Sea is its sovereign territory, claims most of the internationally community view as spurious.

"Will China be bound by rules and will it negotiate with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) multilateral partners or will it try to pick off one by one each individual and get more leverage that way?" she asked.

Thornton, who was initially President Donald Trump's nominee for the assistant secretary position, resigned in June when she was notified she was no longer his choice. She told Friday's audience that her service would conclude at the end of the panel discussion.

'Our soft power is ... more powerful than their soft power'

Part of Trump's new national security strategy announced in December includes moves to combat China on the technological and cyber fronts, but also to work with partners around the world to contest Chinese practices and persuade Beijing to agree to international conventions and standards.

While much of the world's attention has been focused on crises including the terror attacks of 9/11, the Chinese have maintained a singular focus for years.

"They are learning to be more coercive, learning to be more aspirational, learning to be more assertive by what they're getting away with," said the CIA's Collins. "9/11 is one example where the international community had to shift its attention to something else and the Chinese drove through that decade to especially expand where they are, so it's a long way of saying that there are things that happened in the international system, things that ... helped to explain to some degree the speed and expanse of where the Chinese have gotten to where they are today."

US destroyers sailed through Taiwan Strait

Both Thornton and Collins pointed to events over the past decade to partly explain China's rapid expansion and growth.

"The Chinese are very good at taking advantage of opportunities, which they may have been able to do in the recent past with our focus on the Middle East for the first part of the 2000s and following that the financial crisis," Thornton said. "We have to get back to doing what we do well. Our soft power is incredibly more powerful than their soft power. They don't really have that same kind of attractiveness that the US system has, and I think that's because our partners around the world know we stand by them and know we won't impose our will on them, that we'll work together with them."

Collins said that even China's partners would not want to subscribe to the country's way of life.

"I too am optimistic that in the battle for norms and rules and standards of behavior, that the liberal national order is stronger than the repressive standards that the Chinese promulgate," he said. "I'm confident others won't want to subscribe to that."

CNN's Ben Westcott, Steven Jiang and Joshua Berlinger contributed to this report.

Top CIA Expert: China Waging A Quiet 'Cold War' Against US

By John Bowden

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

China is working around the globe to undermine American interests and supplant the United States as the world's leading superpower, a top CIA expert warned Friday.

Michael Collins, deputy assistant director at CIA's East Asia mission center, said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado that China's actions to build man-made islands in the South China Sea — to spur territorial growth and allow for annexation of the islands — were akin to "the Crimea of the East," referring to Russia's 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian region.

"I would argue ... that what they're waging against us is fundamentally a cold war — a cold war not like we saw during the Cold War, but a cold war by definition," Collins said, according to The Associated Press.

The statement from the top CIA official comes days after FBI Director Christopher Wray said that China represents the "broadest" immediate threat to American interests.

"The volume of it. The pervasiveness of it. The significance of it is something that I think this country cannot underestimate," Wray said of Chinese espionage efforts uncovered by his agency.

President Trump said in an interview this week that his administration was all set to implement additional tariffs targeting Chinese imports into the U.S., telling CNBC that he's "ready to go" to \$500 billion in tariffs, which the administration says is equal to all Chinese goods sold in the U.S.

"I'm not doing this for politics. I'm doing this to do the right thing for our country. We have been ripped off by China for a long time, and I told that to President Xi [Jinping]," Trump said in an interview that aired Friday.

China's government has vowed to respond reciprocally to the latest round of tariffs and has filed a challenge with the World Trade Organization.

US And China Are Engaged In A 'Cold War,' CIA Asia Expert Says

By Tom Roeder

[Stars And Stripes](#), July 21, 2018

ASPEN, Colo. (Tribune News Service) — Even as the Trump administration works to warm relations with North Korea and Russia, America's relations with China have chilled so much a top Central Intelligence Agency expert has dusted off an old term: "Cold War."

Michael Collins, the intelligence agency's top China expert, told an Aspen Security Forum crowd Friday that growing competition for global and economic influence between the nations amid the growing power of Chinese leader Xi Jinping merits the term. Xi this year pushed China's Communist Party to lift term limits,

effectively making him president for life as he builds Chinese economic influence and military might.

"What they are leading against us is fundamentally a Cold War," he said.

Much of the security forum, which kicked off Thursday night and runs through Saturday, has focused on President Donald Trump's overtures to Russia and North Korea and questions over whether Russian president Vladimir Putin is still seeking to interfere with American politics after federal indictments charged his regime with meddling in the 2016 presidential campaign.

But China's rise remains the top topic that keeps intelligence analysts and diplomats awake at night. With a globe-spanning trade empire, the planet's largest military force and a new blue-water Navy complete with a pair of aircraft carriers, China over the past two decades has gone from a third wheel in the Cold War to a superpower and main competitor to U.S. prestige and influence, say panelists at the annual forum sponsored by the Aspen Institute.

"At the end of the day, the Chinese fundamentally seek to replace the United States as the leading power of the world," Collins said.

Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Susan Thornton, is also watching China with a wary eye, noting they have also shown off the ability to meddle in regional politics in a manner similar to Russian campaigns in Europe.

"China is not just a footnote to what we're dealing with in Russia," she said.

Key economic outreach campaigns are making the Chinese dragon as daunting as the Russian bear once was. China's "belt and road" initiative seeks to connect it with markets in Asia, Europe and Africa through rail and road infrastructure along with boosts to its maritime presence. China is also growing its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, footing the bill for international development projects and becoming a Beijing-based rival to the World Bank.

Singapore's ambassador to the United States, Ashok Kumar Mirpuri, said China, with its central location on the planet's largest landmass, also has a real-estate advantage in its push for global dominance.

"We have to live with China," Mirpuri said, noting that America is "an ocean away."

U.S. tensions with China have grown in recent months as President Trump has pushed tariffs topping \$200 billion on Chinese goods. Friday, Trump accused China of manipulating the value of its currency to gain an unfair advantage in global trade.

"China, the European Union and others have been manipulating their currencies and interest rates lower, while the U.S. is raising rates while the dollars gets

stronger and stronger with each passing day — taking away our big competitive edge," Trump said on Twitter.

Collins, the CIA expert, worries whether the U.S. has enough leverage to make Trump's trade threats stick. While America is an important trading partner for China, it has solid trade relationships across the globe.

"Trade with the United States is not that significant in terms of their economic well-being," he said.

With nearly 1.4 billion residents and a growing middle class, Chinese businesses have easy access to an internal market that's the world's largest. He cautioned that China's Xi likely is unwilling to cut Trump a deal that would impact that nation's growing international status.

"I think they are probably scratching their heads figuring out what the next move may be," he said.

And while China has partnered with the United States to deter a growing conflict with nuclear-armed North Korea, Chinese leaders are also worrying about internal concerns in that case. Thornton said Xi wants to avoid a war on the Korean Peninsula, but also wants to see U.S. influence over key allies in Asia like South Korea and Japan decline.

In both those nations, America has military bases and long-standing defense agreements that are geared toward deterring Chinese aggression. China now is working to match the Pentagon's military power, with Air Force and Navy building programs that have turned toward the technological quality of weaponry rather than the old Chinese standard that relied on massive quantities of cheap, low-tech weapons.

Marcel Lettre, who served as the Pentagon's intelligence chief under the Obama administration, said upgrading Chinese military forces is a massive piece of work.

"It's a useful reminder to understand the modernization is taking place on a large baseline of a military," he said.

The Pentagon's latest defense strategy calls out growing Chinese capabilities and is a driving factor behind President Trump's push for a separate "space force" to protect America satellites. Lettre said the changes are a necessary reaction to China's rising military might.

But, experts said, China might not be the monolithic rival it appears to be.

Collins noted that Xi faces critics at home who are quietly questioning his growing political status that gives him leadership power reminiscent of Mao Zedong.

"There are pockets of criticism and concern on him for what he's done in leadership and questions about the direction he's set," Collins said.

Thornton described the Xi regime as one that is powerful, but brittle, making it vulnerable to internal changes among the Chinese population.

"I think the Chinese government and Communist Party has a legitimacy problem," she said.

Thornton said the United States needs to build closer bonds with its traditional allies and boost its global outreach to keep pace with China's rise. But America, with its international economic reach backed by an open society with democratic institutions and a long list of global friends, has an advantage, she said. The United States still has a greater ability to influence other countries through the appeal and attraction of its freedoms and opportunities.

"Our soft power is incredibly more powerful than Chinese soft power," she said.

China Is Waging A 'Cold War' Against The U.S., Says CIA Asia Expert

[NBC News](#), July 21, 2018

LONDON — China is waging a "cold war" against the United States in an effort to take its place as the leading global power, a top CIA expert on Asia said Friday.

Beijing does not want to go to war with the U.S. but is attempting to undermine Washington's global position by using all avenues available to it, said Michael Collins, deputy assistant director of the CIA's East Asia mission center.

"I would argue ... that what they're waging against us is fundamentally a cold war — a cold war not like we saw during THE Cold War [between the U.S. and the Soviet Union] but a cold war by definition," he told the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

"The Chinese fundamentally seek to replace the United States as the leading power in the world," Collins added.

While the U.S. remains the world's dominant military and economic power, China now is the world's second-biggest economy and has the largest military.

Relations between the two powers have worsened in recent months, with the U.S. and China imposing tariffs on billions of dollars' worth of each other's goods in a growing tit-for-tat trade war.

President Donald Trump threatened to escalate tensions further Friday, by telling CNBC that he would be willing to slap tariffs on every Chinese good imported to the U.S. if need be.

But diplomatic tensions stretch beyond the escalating trade war.

Washington has repeatedly railed against Beijing for what it says is a deeply entrenched theft of U.S.

intellectual property and forced technology transfer from U.S. companies to Chinese competitors, charges Chinese officials deny. It has also criticized China for asserting its dominance in the contested South China Sea.

"I would argue that it's the Crimea of the East," Collins said, referring to Russia's brash annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, which was condemned throughout the West.

Collins is not alone in the intelligence community in his concern over growing Chinese influence.

Earlier this week FBI Director Christopher Wray told the security forum that China represents the broadest, most challenging and most significant threat to the U.S.

"For them it is a whole of state effort. It is economic espionage as well as traditional espionage," Wray told the security forum earlier this week, adding that the threat from China is something that cannot be underestimated.

Collins agreed. "The Chinese are increasingly defining a conflict with the U.S. and what we stand behind as a systems conflict," he said, explaining that they were pushing their own form of socialism.

"It sets up a competition with us and what we stand behind far more significantly by any means than what the Russian's could put forward," he added.

Susan Thornton, acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, agreed with Collins that China posed a different kind of challenge to the United States than Russia. "China is not just a footnote to what we're dealing with with Russia," said Thornton.

Marcel Lettre, former undersecretary of defense for intelligence, who was on the panel with Collins and Thornton agreed that China was using a myriad of different tools to exert its influence.

He noted that China has the second largest defense budget in the world and the largest standing army of ground forces, but said it was also pursuing advances in cyber espionage, artificial intelligence and hyper-sonic technologies.

The warnings came at a time when Washington needs China's support in its negotiations with North Korea to de-nuclearize the peninsula.

It also comes as Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Africa Saturday, on a four-nation visit seeking deeper military and economic ties.

China is Africa's largest trading partner and the country opened its first military base on the continent last year in the east African nation of Djibouti.

By comparison Trump has shown little interest in the world's second most populous continent.

Residents Near Russian Diplomat Building Say 'spies Are Everywhere'

By Isabel Vincent

[New York Post](#), July 21, 2018

In a quiet corner of The Bronx, nestled among trees and quaint 1960s houses, the Cold War still lingers.

The center of intrigue is located in northern Riverdale, an area dominated by the towering, white apartment complex that houses diplomats and others who work for Russia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Across the road, on West 255th Street, sits an unassuming two-story house that residents believe doubles as an FBI command post, they told The Post.

"When my windows are open, I feel like Big Brother is watching me," said a 57-year-old resident who recently bought one of the homes facing the 20-story Russian tower at 355 West 255th St., which is surrounded by spiked fencing and features sports facilities and a school for the children of mission employees.

"It's also a real eyesore and spoils our view," he said of the pre-fabricated apartment building that was built by the Soviet Union in 1974.

Residents who lived in the area when Soviet construction workers built the apartment complex at the height of the Cold War remember it going up "from top to bottom," with pre-fabricated slabs of concrete affixed to the skeletal structure.

"It was like they were assembling a piece of furniture from IKEA, only on a massive scale," one longtime Riverdale resident told The Post.

Builders and all construction materials were imported from Russia so as to minimize the risk that American intelligence could plant listening devices or sabotage the construction, the resident told The Post.

Although it's a mystery what goes on at the giant complex — a place many local residents refer to simply as "the compound" — most assume that many of their Russian neighbors are spies. The Russian Diplomat Housing building in the Bronx, NY.J.C. RICE

In fact, they were barely fazed by the arrest of alleged Russian spy Maria Butina in Washington, DC, last week. The same went for the Justice Department's recent indictments against 12 Russian nationals as special counsel Robert Mueller continued his probe of Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Last March, the Trump administration expelled 60 Russians in retaliation for the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain. Twelve of those forced to leave the US lived in New York. In December 2016, President Obama expelled 35 alleged Russian spies in retaliation

for what American espionage agencies said was Russian interference in the presidential election.

Many believe Riverdale has long been an epicenter of Russian intrigue and espionage. Soviet defector Arkady Shevchenko, a former advisor to the Soviet foreign ministry who lived in the building before he defected to the United States in 1978, noted in his book "Breaking with Moscow" that "the apartment building in Riverdale and the mission . . . bristled with antennas for listening to American conversations."

Neighbors are not surprised, and some expressed anger, that the residents of the compound never bothered to reach out to them or invite them in for a tour.

"The only people who have ever been allowed in there were the police, fire department and the garbage collectors," said Beth Zakar, a jewelry designer who lives across the street from the Russian Diplomatic Compound. "But there are spies everywhere here."

In 2015, the FBI arrested Evgeny Buryakov, a Russian who lived blocks away from the Russian tower in Riverdale. He was accused of trying to recruit ordinary Americans to help him conduct economic espionage and communicated with "Moscow center" through codes from "a secure office" in Manhattan, court papers say. Buryakov, whose code name was "Zhenya," was part of an elite trio of high-level agents who were based in New York. He was deported after pleading guilty to working as a secret Russian agent.

"No one knows what goes on there," said Jane Reeder, a psychotherapist who has lived across the street from the Russian compound for 32 years. "They will walk past you on the street and there is never an acknowledgment that you are a person."

In fact, the only time Reeder remembers the Russians making any impression on the community occurred when police were called to break up a group of rowdy Russian teenagers who were smoking and drinking outside her home in the wee hours of a summer morning.

"They were just being kids, but the police came and cleared them out," she said. "Other than that, there's been nothing."

At the nearby European Gourmet & Catering, where smoked sturgeon and caviar are sold by the pound, an attendant said there were no tensions between local residents and the Russian nationals.

"Everything is fine here," she told The Post in Russian-accented English.

The FBI did not answer a request for comment.

Additional reporting by Khristina Narizhnaya

OTHER DHS NEWS

MGM Banks On Never-used Anti-terrorism Law In Suing Victims

By Regina Garcia Cano

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

LAS VEGAS (AP) – The unprecedented move from MGM Resorts International to sue hundreds of victims of last year's mass shooting in Las Vegas using an obscure U.S. law never tested in court has been framed by the casino-operator as an effort to avoid years of costly litigation – but the legal maneuver may not play out that way.

The company is not seeking money in the lawsuits filed in at least seven states over the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history. Instead, it wants federal courts to declare that it has no liability to survivors or families of slain victims under a federal law enacted after the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

MGM argues that the Oct. 1 shooting met two conditions of the law: it qualifies as an act of terrorism and federally certified security services were used at the venue where 22,000 concertgoers were gathered as gunfire rained down from the company's Mandalay Bay casino-resort.

But experts believe legal resolutions won't come quickly because appeals are practically guaranteed and a U.S. court may not be the appropriate entity to determine whether the shooting is considered terrorism. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said Friday that the law authorizes its leader to make that declaration.

MGM's lawsuits target victims who have sued the company and voluntarily dismissed their claims or have threatened to sue after a gunman shattered the windows of his hotel suite and fired on a crowd of country music fans. Stephen Paddock killed 58 people and injured hundreds more before killing himself.

MGM is invoking the Support Anti-terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act of 2002, enacted to urge development and use of anti-terrorism technologies by providing companies a way to limit liability if their federally certified products or services fail to prevent a terrorist attack. After 9/11, manufacturers and others were concerned they could be sued out of business after an attack.

The law has never been used to avoid liability after mass violence, such as the shooting at a Colorado movie theater in 2012, because previous attacks haven't involved services or products certified by Homeland Security. The department has only approved about 1,000

services and technologies, including airport screening equipment and stadium security.

MGM said in the lawsuits filed in Nevada, California, Utah and other states that its security vendor for the outdoor concert venue, Contemporary Services Corp., was federally certified.

The Department of Homeland Security said in response to MGM's lawsuits that its secretary "possesses the authority to determine whether an act was an 'act of terrorism'" under the law in question, and it "has not made any such determination regarding the Route 91 Harvest Festival mass shooting incident."

The agency says it's reviewing the matter. The law broadly defines it as an unlawful act that harms a person in the U.S. and "uses or attempts to use" weapons or other methods that can cause mass destruction.

MGM says Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen is not the only one with authority to make the call and that her public statements "make clear" the attack meets the law's requirements.

The company's argument is "far too broad of an interpretation of the statute. It should be fairly clear that what MGM did is not what was intended in the statute," said Brian Finch, a partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman in Washington D.C. "It is (the secretary's) responsibility, not that of a judge."

CSC's general counsel, James Service, said the company doesn't comment on litigation.

MGM faced immediate backlash over the lawsuits this week, and it insisted in tweets and statements that it is trying to expedite resolutions for the victims. It stressed that it is "not asking for money or attorney's fees" and directed the complaints "only at people who have already sued us or have threatened to sue us."

"We are seeking justice through the federal court system in order to reach a timely resolution. We want to resolve these cases quickly, fairly and efficiently," spokeswoman Debra DeShong said on MGM's Twitter account.

Victims' attorneys and a legal scholar told The Associated Press that the company's strategy won't speed up anything.

Alfred Yen, associate faculty dean and professor at Boston College Law School, said the law is not perfectly clear, and unless the parties settle, the matter could reach the U.S. Supreme Court because whoever loses is likely to appeal.

"This is a high-stakes, controversial case. A court would be very careful not to rush to a judgment on this," Yen said. "It is going to take a long time for a court to decide the merits of this case."

Follow Regina Garcia Cano on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/reginagarciakNO>

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Apple Watch, FitBit Could Feel Cost Of U.S. Tariffs

By Stephen Nellis

[Reuters](#), July 20, 2018

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GLOBAL MEDIA

Canada's Immigration Detention Reviews Stacked Against Detainees: Audit

By Anna Mehler Paperny

[Reuters](#), July 21, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Australians Protest Five Years Of Offshore Detention Policy

By Megan Specia

[New York Times](#), July 21, 2018

Thousands protested in cities across Australia on Saturday to mark five years of a policy under which asylum-seekers and migrants have been turned away and detained on remote Pacific.

Messages were read aloud from those still languishing in deteriorating conditions on the islands, years after being detained.

Since 2013, anyone trying to reach Australia by boat has been sent for processing to the islands of Manus, which is part of Papua New Guinea, and Nauru. In 2013, Kevin Rudd, then the prime minister of Australia, unveiled a policy that barred the migrants from being settled as refugees in Australia as part of a resettlement arrangement with Papua New Guinea.

In the years that followed, thousands were sent to offshore detention centers on the small Pacific islands as a result of the policy. Subsequent Australian administrations maintained the policy despite repeated calls from the United Nations Refugee Agency and international human rights groups, as well as Australian citizens, to end the detentions.

The protesters on Saturday carried signs denouncing the policy and calling for those still on the islands to be resettled in Australia.

Behrouz Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian refugee who has been held on Manus Island since 2013, thanked the Australian protesters in a post on his Facebook page. His message was read out at some of the rallies.

In it, he denounced the offshore detention policy of the Australian government, saying it is still damaging people.

"Those of us who remain continue to experience this suffering, wondering if we will ever be free to make our lives somewhere in peace and security, and free to see our families again," Mr. Boochani wrote.

He detailed his daily life on Manus in a series of video diaries sent to The New York Times in 2016, and has been a vocal advocate for those detained under the Australian policy.

A Kurdish dissident journalist, Mr. Boochani fled his home country of Iran in 2013 after his offices were raided. He flew to Indonesia and paid smugglers to board a boat bound for Australian territory. But he arrived on July 23, 2013, four days after Australia signed the agreement with Papua New Guinea. He was taken to detention on Manus.

Since that time, he has remained on the island despite his refugee status. Last year, he was forcibly relocated to a new detention center on the island along with the hundreds of men who remain there.

"As you know, many innocent people on Manus and Nauru are still suffering," he wrote in his Saturday message to the demonstrations. "Too many Australians are still indifferent to this, or too unsure of what to do. But you make us stronger."

Australia has maintained that forbidding asylum-seekers and refugees who reach Australia by boat to enter the country discourages dangerous ocean crossings and human trafficking.

A few hundred people have been relocated to the United States since 2017 as part of a one-off resettlement deal between the American government and Australia. But progress has been slow and the agreement, made under the Obama administration, has been repeatedly questioned by President Trump. Australia has also rejected offers by New Zealand to take some of the refugees.

This month, the Australian government allowed a young girl in Nauru to seek medical care in Australia, the latest in a series of refugee children who sought treatment in the country.

About 1,600 people remain on the two islands, with 750 men on Manus and 850 men, women and children on Nauru, according to the most recent report from Human Rights Watch.

The rights group this week called on the Australian government to transfer the detainees on Manus and

Nauru to Australia or a safe third country to “end this harmful practice of offshore processing once and for all.”

“Sending asylum-seekers offshore doesn’t free Australia of its obligations to these people,” said Elaine Pearson, Australia director at Human Rights Watch. “The past five years of this cruel policy should be fixed by transferring them and future arrivals to safe locations in Australia and abroad.”

NATIONAL NEWS

Carter Page FISA Documents Are Released By Justice Department

By Charlie Savage

[New York Times](#), July 21, 2018

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration disclosed on Saturday a previously top-secret set of documents related to the wiretapping of Carter Page, the onetime Trump campaign adviser who was at the center of highly contentious accusations by Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee that the F.B.I. had abused its surveillance powers.

Democrats in February rejected the Republican claims that law enforcement officials had improperly obtained a warrant to monitor Mr. Page, accusing them of putting out misinformation to defend President Trump and sow doubts about the origin of the Russia investigation. But even as Republicans and Democrats issued dueling memos characterizing the materials underlying the surveillance of Mr. Page, the public had no access to the records.

On Saturday evening, those materials — an October 2016 application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap Mr. Page, along with several renewal applications — were released to The New York Times and other news organizations that had filed Freedom of Information Act lawsuits to obtain them. Mr. Trump had declassified their existence earlier this year.

“This application targets Carter Page,” the document said. “The F.B.I. believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.” A line was then redacted, and then it picked up with “undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law. Mr. Page is a former foreign policy adviser to a candidate for U.S. president.”

Mr. Page has denied being a Russian agent and has not been charged with a crime in the nearly two years since the initial wiretap application was filed. He did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

The spectacle of the release was itself noteworthy, given that wiretapping under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, is normally one of the government’s closest-guarded secrets. No such application materials had apparently become public in the 40 years since Congress enacted that law to regulate the interception of phone calls and other communications on domestic soil in search of spies and terrorists, as opposed to wiretapping for ordinary criminal investigations.

The documents made public on Saturday were heavily redacted in places, and some of the substance of the applications had already become public in February, via the Republican and Democratic Intelligence Committee memos.

Visible portions showed that the F.B.I. in stark terms had told the intelligence court that Mr. Page “has established relationships with Russian government officials, including Russian intelligence officers”; that the bureau believed “the Russian government’s efforts are being coordinated with Page and perhaps other individuals associated with” Mr. Trump’s campaign; and that Mr. Page “has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government.”

The fight over the surveillance of Mr. Page centered on the fact that the F.B.I., in making the case to judges that he might be a Russian agent, had used some claims drawn from a notorious Democratic-funded dossier compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence agent.

The application cited claims from the dossier that Mr. Page, while on a trip to Moscow in July 2016, had met with two senior Russian representatives and discussed matters like lifting sanctions imposed on Russia for its intervention in Ukraine and a purported file of compromising information about Mr. Trump that the Russian government had. (Mr. Page has denied those allegations, although he later contradicted his claims that he had not met any Russian government officials on that trip.)

Republicans portrayed the Steele dossier — which also contained salacious claims about Mr. Trump apparently not included in the wiretap application — as dubious, and blasted the F.B.I. for using material from it while not telling the court that the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign had funded the research.

But Democrats noted that the application also contained evidence against Mr. Page unrelated to the dossier, and an unredacted portion of the application discussed efforts by Russian agents in 2013 to recruit Americans as assets. It has previously been reported that Mr. Page was one of their targets, although any

discussion of Mr. Page's interactions with them in the application is still censored.

Democrats argued in February that the F.B.I. had told the court that the research's sponsor had the political motive of wanting to discredit Mr. Trump's campaign. They argued that it was normal not to specifically name Americans and American organizations in such materials. The released documents show that portion of the filings, which the previously released Democratic memo had quoted.

The application shows that the F.B.I. told the court it believed that the person who hired Mr. Steele was looking for dirt to discredit Mr. Trump. But it added that based on Mr. Steele's previous reporting history with the F.B.I., in which he had "provided reliable information," the bureau believed his information cited in the application "to be credible."

The applications largely avoided using names; renewal materials noted that they would continue to refer to "Candidate #1" by that description, for example, even though he "is now the president."

The renewal applications from 2017 told the court in boldface print that the F.B.I. had severed its relationship with Mr. Steele because he had shared some of his claims with a news organization in October 2016, contrary to the F.B.I.'s "admonishment" to speak only to law enforcement officials about the matter. But they said the bureau continued to assess his prior reporting as "reliable."

The final two renewal applications also contained two additional pages describing a letter Mr. Page sent to the Justice Department in February 2017 accusing the Clinton campaign of spreading false information about him.

The unredacted portions of the original application and the three renewal applications are otherwise largely identical, so it is not visible whether the F.B.I. told the court that it was gaining useful intelligence from the wiretap of Mr. Page as it asked for extensions. But the length of the applications grew significantly each time, indicating that new information was being added: They were 66 pages, 79 pages, 91 pages and 101 pages, respectively.

The materials also revealed which Federal District Court judges signed off on the wiretapping of Mr. Page: Judges Rosemary Collyer, Michael Mosman, Anne C. Conway and Raymond J. Dearie. All were appointed by Republican presidents.

As has been publicly known from the February congressional fight, the application also contained a description of a Yahoo News article from September 2016 that discussed the investigation into Mr. Page's Russia ties. It is now known that Mr. Steele was a source

for that article, but the application and renewals state that the F.B.I. did not believe he "directly" provided information to Yahoo News.

Republicans at the time claimed that the F.B.I. had misleadingly used the article as corroboration for Mr. Steele's claims, while Democrats said that was false and that it was instead included to inform the court that Mr. Page had denied the allegations.

The section of the application that describes the Yahoo News article is titled "Page's Denial of Cooperation With the Russian Government to Influence the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election."

Since February, even as Mr. Trump and his allies have continued to portray the Russia investigation as a "witch hunt," it has produced indictments of two dozen Russians and Russian government officials for efforts to covertly manipulate American social media and for hacking and releasing Democratic emails during the campaign.

Noting that the original application and its three renewals were approved by senior law enforcement officials in two administrations and by federal judges, for example, Representative Jerrold Nadler, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, portrayed the threat from Russia that the F.B.I. was investigating as real and severe.

"Anyone aware of these facts would recognize that these applications were necessary and appropriate," Mr. Nadler said. "Those who say otherwise are trying desperately to protect President Trump from a broader investigation that must be allowed to take its course without interference."

While applications for criminal wiretap orders often become public, showing what the government's basis was for seeking it, the government until now has refused to disclose FISA materials even when using evidence gathered through such wiretaps to prosecute people.

But in February, Mr. Trump — over the objections of law enforcement professionals — took the unprecedented step of lowering the walls of secrecy around such materials to enable House Intelligence Committee Republicans, led by Representative Devin Nunes of California, to disclose their three-and-a-half-page memo, which sought to portray the surveillance of Mr. Page as scandalous.

In addition to invoking Mr. Trump's declassification to seek disclosure of the underlying materials by filing a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the Justice Department, The Times also petitioned the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to unseal the materials itself. The court has not responded to that request.

Follow Charlie Savage on Twitter @charlie_savage.

FBI Releases FISA Records On Carter Page Surveillance

By Brad Heath

[USA Today](#), July 21, 2018

The FBI told a secret federal surveillance court in 2016 that it believed Carter Page, a onetime foreign policy aide to President Donald Trump's campaign, "has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government" in its efforts to interfere in the presidential election, according to a trove of documents made public late Saturday.

The FBI released more than 400 pages of documents in response to lawsuits by USA TODAY and other media organizations. It was the first time the government had made public copies of top-secret applications seeking wiretaps of an American under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which are among the government's most closely held intelligence secrets.

Swaths of the records released Saturday were blacked out because the FBI said they remain classified, including details about why the FBI believed Page was participating in Russia's election meddling. But the fragments of records the government made public offer a rare window into one of the earliest phases of the investigation into possible ties between Russian meddling and the Trump campaign, which has cast a shadow over the first years of Trump's administration.

More: Who is former Trump adviser Carter Page?

In those applications, FBI agents said they had amassed evidence that "the Russian Government's efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. Presidential election were being coordinated with Page and perhaps other individuals associated with" Trump's campaign.

The release comes in the aftermath of a bitter dispute over the government's investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 campaign. Trump and Republican lawmakers have accused the government of abusing surveillance laws to monitor Trump's campaign, a charge Justice Department officials have disputed.

Four federal judges separately approved the surveillance requests, each time saying the government had shown "probable cause" that Page was acting as an agent of the Russian government. Two of the four surveillance requests had been approved by top Trump appointees in the Justice Department, including Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

The records released Saturday confirm that the FBI based its surveillance requests in part on the work of Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer hired by a research firm working for Trump's opponent, Hillary Clinton, who compiled the now-infamous "dossier" alleging links between Russia and the Trump campaign.

The FBI said in the application that Steele wasn't told who had hired him to conduct that work, but that Steele "was likely looking for information that could be used to discredit" Trump's campaign. The FBI said it believed Steele's work to be "credible."

But the records also show the FBI harbored broader suspicions – and broader evidence – about Page's possible ties to the Russian government. In applying for permission to wiretap him, investigators wrote that Page "has relationships with Russian Government officials, including Russian intelligence officers."

More: Trump campaign adviser Carter Page acknowledges meeting with senior Russian officials: transcript

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., the ranking Democrat on the House intelligence committee and one of a handful of lawmakers who has previously reviewed the surveillance orders, said the records "affirm that our nation faced a profound counterintelligence threat prior to the 2016 election, and the Department of Justice and FBI took appropriate steps to investigate whether any U.S. persons were acting as an agent of a foreign power."

Page on Saturday accused the government of "civil rights abuses" and said on Twitter that the surveillance documents showed the government's "complete ignorance" regarding Russia.

In a request to extend its surveillance of Page in April 2017, after Trump took office, the FBI said it believed "Page had been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government."

The FBI began surveilling Page in October 2016, shortly after he left Trump's campaign. It was carried out under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows the government to monitor communications when it can persuade a judge that someone is working as an agent of a foreign power. The records show four federal judges signed off on the surveillance, which continued into 2017.

The documents offer few clues about the scope of that surveillance. But in its application, the FBI noted that the surveillance "may incidentally acquire other foreign intelligence information."

They also offer little information about what, if anything, the government learned in nearly a year of monitoring Page's communications. The surveillance court granted the Justice Department permission to extend its surveillance of Page three times in 2017. In each of those applications, the department said it was providing the court updated information about its investigation, but those details were largely omitted from the materials released Saturday.

The FBI's surveillance applications argued the government had probable cause to believe Page had committed a crime in acting as an agent of the Russian government, though the Justice Department did not reveal Saturday which laws it thought he had broken. U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer endorsed that conclusion when she approved the surveillance request.

Prosecutors working for special counsel Robert Mueller this month indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers for hacking Democratic political organizations during the 2016 campaign, and releasing troves of stolen information in an attempt to influence the presidential election.

USA TODAY and the James Madison Project, a non-partisan organization that promotes government accountability, filed a lawsuit last year under the Freedom of Information Act seeking records about surveillance of Trump's campaign. The suit came after Trump claimed the Obama administration "wire-tapped" Trump Tower before the election.

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Documents Show FBI Believed Trump Campaign Aide Carter Page Had Been Recruited By Russians.

By Daniel Politi

[Slate](#), July 22, 2018

The FBI released a cache of previously top-secret redacted documents Saturday night having to do with the surveillance of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page. The documents included a redacted version of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court wiretap application as well as several renewals. "The F.B.I. believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government," reads one document. The purpose of this recruitment was to "undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law."

Page, who has repeatedly denied he was a Russian agent, had left the Trump campaign shortly before the FBI sought to monitor him. But in the more than 400 pages of documents that were released Saturday night, the government made its case for monitoring Page, starting in October 2016. Although much of what was in the documents was already known, the release itself is significant as the New York Times explains:

The spectacle of the release was itself noteworthy, given that wiretapping under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, is normally one of the government's closest-guarded secrets. No such application materials had apparently become public in

the 40 years since Congress enacted that law to regulate the interception of phone calls and other communications on domestic soil in search of spies and terrorists, as opposed to wiretapping for ordinary criminal investigations.

Although heavily redacted, the documents make clear that the FBI was clearly concerned about Page, saying he "has established relationships with Russian government officials, including Russian intelligence officers." In addition, the FBI believed Page "has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government."

Whether the FBI was justified in its concerns over Page had been the subject of dueling classified memos from Republicans and Democrats earlier this year. And while Rep. Devin Nunes' effort to question the surveillance had already been seen as a weak, these documents seem to highlight just how misleading the arguments laid out in what became known as the "Nunes memo" actually were. The Washington Post explains:

Even based on what was known then, the hype surrounding Nunes's memo seemed to oversell the point. In short order, other revelations about the warrant application made it clear that the contents of the memo were iffy. It was the second time in two years that Nunes had gone to bat in defense of one of Trump's pet theories, and neither time worked out that well.

As it turns out though, Nunes's efforts to raise questions about the surveillance warrant, granted by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, were even less robust than they seemed at the time. With the release on Friday of a redacted copy of both the initial warrant application targeting Page in October 2016 and the three 90-day extensions of the warrant, we can get a better sense of just how far from the mark the Nunes memo actually was.

Trump though saw things rather differently and took to Twitter on Sunday to say that the documents "confirm with little doubt" that the department of Justice and the FBI "misled the court." He makes the broad claim without citing any evidence and seemingly ignoring all that the documents do reveal about why there was concern about his connections to Russia. In a second tweet, Trump said that it was "looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC."

Speaking on CNN Sunday, Carter Page characterized the declassified documents as "so ridiculous." The former Trump campaign adviser said the documents were "so misleading" and added that "it's literally a complete joke." Page vehemently denied he

had ever “been an agent of a foreign power by an y stretch of the imagination.”

Carter Page Subject Of ‘Targeted Recruitment’ By Russia, FBI Documents Reveal

FISA warrant noted he was ‘collaborating with the Russian government’

By Jeff Mordock

[Washington Times](#), July 21, 2018

Carter Page was the subject of a “targeted recruitment” by the Russian government, according to the late Saturday release of previously top-secret documents used by the FBI to obtain a wiretap warrant for the former Trump campaign aide.

That was among the revelations included in the FBI’s October 2016 application to obtain a wiretap from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. The documents were released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by Judicial Watch and several media outlets.

Although the 412-page document is heavily redacted but details concerns the FBI had about Mr. Page, who has denied being a Russian spy.

“This application targets Carter Page,” the application said. “The FBI believes Page has been the subject of a targeted recruitment by the Russian government.” There is redacted line followed by “undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law.”

The application also alleges that Mr. Page “has established relationships with Russian government officials, including Russian intelligence officers.” FBI officials believed the Russian government’s efforts to meddle in the election was coordinated through Mr. Page and perhaps other members of the Trump campaign.

Mr. Page “has been collaborating with the Russian government,” the warrant says.

On three separate occasions, officials from the Department of Justice — including Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein — renewed the FISA application.

The application also cited a claim from a controversial Democratic-funded dossier compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele. It cites Mr. Steele’s allegation that Mr. Page attended a meeting with a person close to Russian President Vladimir Putin in July 2016, while he was still working for the Trump campaign.

FBI agents told the FISA court that it believed the person who hired Mr. Steele was seeking to discredit

Trump, according to the warrant. But they also said the bureau believed the information cited in the application “to be credible” because that person provided reliable information in the past.

The name of the person who hired Mr. Steele is not disclosed in the FISA application.

This is said to be the first time in 40 years that a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Application (FISA) warrant has become public.

Mr. Page’s FISA warrant has ballooned into one of the biggest political battles in Washington over the past years.

Republicans have charged the FISA warrant was fraudulently obtained by the FBI officials in an effort to spy on the Trump campaign. Democrats, meanwhile, have contended that the warrant is possible evidence there was collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia ahead of the 2016 election. They have also claimed the Republicans have attacked the warrant in an effort to undermine special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe into Russian election meddling.

Documents Reveal Former Trump Aide Was Recruited By Russia

[TIME](#), July 22, 2018

(WASHINGTON) — The Trump administration on Saturday released a set of documents once deemed top secret relating to the wiretapping of a onetime adviser to Donald Trump’s presidential campaign.

The New York Times reported that the documents involving former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page were released to the Times and several other media organizations that had filed Freedom of Information Act lawsuits to obtain them. The FBI later posted the documents to its FOIA website online.

The materials include an October 2016 application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap Page as well as several renewal applications, the Times reported. It is highly unusual for documents related to FISA wiretap applications to be released.

While the documents were heavily redacted in places, the Times reported that visible portions of the documents show the FBI telling the intelligence court that Page “has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government.” The agency also told the court that “the FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.”

Page has denied being a Russian agent.

After a redaction, the Times reported that the application to wiretap Page included a partial sentence: “... undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016

U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law.”

The surveillance of Page became a contentious matter between Republican and Democratic lawmakers earlier this year. Republicans alleged the FBI had abused its surveillance powers and improperly obtained the warrant, a charge that Democrats rebutted as both sides characterized the documents in different ways. The documents, meanwhile, remained out of public view.

House Democrats were quick to say that the documents bolstered their arguments.

“For more than a year, House Republicans have bullied the Department of Justice and FBI to release highly sensitive documents to derail the Special Counsel’s and other legitimate national security investigations and cover for the President,” House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said in a statement. “For the sake of our national security and our democracy, these vital investigations must be allowed to continue unhindered by Republican interference. The GOP must cease their attacks on our law enforcement and intelligence communities, and finally decide where their loyalty lies.”

Rep. Adam Schiff, the California Democrat who is the ranking member of the House intelligence committee, said the documents underscore the “legitimate concern” the FBI had about Page’s activities. Yet Schiff said the materials shouldn’t have been released during an ongoing investigation because of national security. He blamed Trump for making public House Republicans’ initial memo about the FISA applications, a move by Trump that the congressman called “nakedly political and self-interested, and designed to to (sic) interfere with the Special Counsel’s investigation.”

The FBI Believed Trump Adviser Carter Page Was Recruited By Russia

By Reuters

[Newsweek](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Justice Department Releases Carter Page Surveillance Documents

By Christopher Cadelago

[Politico](#), July 21, 2018

New documents related to the wiretapping of Carter Page — the former Trump campaign adviser at the center of the Russia investigation and bias

allegations at the FBI — were released by the Trump administration on Saturday.

Page served as a foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign before he came under scrutiny for a trip to Moscow, where he interacted with a senior Russian government official.

A redacted version of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court wiretap application — which had previously been classified — and several renewals were released after requests by the news media.

“The F.B.I. believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government,” the document states, to “undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law.”

Page has repeatedly denied being a Russian agent.

Although the essential contents of the heavily redacted documents were mostly known to the public — via Intelligence Committee memos released by Democrats and Republicans — their release follows sustained attacks against the probe into Russian election meddling by the president and his allies.

Republican allies of the president have long said the wiretaps of Page were tainted because they relied on the infamous dossier by former British intelligence agent Christopher Steele, but the newly disclosed documents suggest the FBI did not lean heavily on claims drawn from the dossier.

Administration Releases Documents About Former Trump Adviser

[Associated Press](#), July 21, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) – The Trump administration on Saturday released a set of documents once deemed top secret relating to the wiretapping of a onetime adviser to Donald Trump’s presidential campaign.

The New York Times reported that the documents involving former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page were released to the Times and several other media organizations that had filed Freedom of Information Act lawsuits to obtain them. The FBI later posted the documents to its FOIA website online.

The materials include an October 2016 application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap Page as well as several renewal applications, the Times reported. It is highly unusual for documents related to FISA wiretap applications to be released.

While the documents were heavily redacted in places, the Times reported that visible portions of the documents show the FBI telling the intelligence court that Page “has been collaborating and conspiring with

the Russian government.” The agency also told the court that “the FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.”

Page has denied being a Russian agent.

After a redaction, the Times reported that the application to wiretap Page included a partial sentence: “... undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law.”

The surveillance of Page became a contentious matter between Republican and Democratic lawmakers earlier this year. Republicans alleged the FBI had abused its surveillance powers and improperly obtained the warrant, a charge that Democrats rebutted as both sides characterized the documents in different ways. The documents, meanwhile, remained out of public view.

House Democrats were quick to say that the documents bolstered their arguments.

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Rep. Adam Schiff, the California Democrat who is the ranking member of the House intelligence committee, said the documents underscore the “legitimate concern” the FBI had about Page’s activities. Yet Schiff said the materials shouldn’t have been released during an ongoing investigation because of national security. He blamed Trump for making public House Republicans’ initial memo about the FISA applications, a move by Trump that the congressman called “nakedly political and self-interested, and designed to to (sic) interfere with the Special Counsel’s investigation.”

FBI Documents: <https://vault.fbi.gov/d1-release>

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FBI Releases Carter Page Surveillance Warrant Documents

By Jeremy Herb And David Shortell

[CNN](#), July 21, 2018

(CNN)The FBI on Saturday released a redacted version of its previously classified foreign surveillance warrant application on Trump campaign foreign policy adviser Carter Page, which has been the subject of a heated partisan debate over the FBI’s tactics investigating members of the Trump campaign.

The FBI released the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant application after news organizations and advocacy groups like Judicial Watch sued for its disclosure.

The warrant, which was approved for Page in 2016, allowed the FBI to conduct surveillance on Page. It’s been one of the key moves that Republicans have charged is evidence of a pattern of abuse by the Justice Department and the FBI targeting the Trump campaign.

The release itself is significant as it marks the first public disclosure of a highly sensitive FISA request. Information included in the request had been largely reported through two declassified memos released separately by Republicans and Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee, but Saturday’s disclosure puts the FBI’s own argument in black and white for the first time.

The more than 400-page document released Saturday, which includes the initial October 2016 FISA warrant on Page and three subsequent renewals, is heavily redacted.

It states that the FBI “believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.”

“The FBI believes that Page has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government,” the application states, adding that “there is probable cause that such activities involve or are about to involve violations of the criminal statutes of the United States.”

The application says that a significant purpose of the request is to “collect foreign intelligence information as part of the FBI’s investigation of this target.”

It does have some information about Page’s activities, which included a July 2016 trip to Russia in which Page was accused in the opposition research dossier of having met with a top Russian energy official, something Page denies.

The application notes that Page sent a letter to then-FBI Director James Comey to deny the accusation two days after a news story came out stating that Page was under investigation.

Signatures from top FBI and Justice Department officials, including Comey, and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appear on each of the four applications.

Page has denied that he ever cut any political deals with the Kremlin.

The FISA warrant that was issued and renewed multiple times for Page was the subject of the memo written by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes that charged the FBI abused its surveillance powers.

Conservative critics of special counsel Robert Mueller have argued that the FISA warrant is tainted — based on the opposition research dossier on Trump and Russia that was paid for by Democrats — and that because the FISA warrant helped launch the FBI investigation into Trump and Russia, the whole investigation is tainted.

Democrats, however, say that the FISA warrant on Page was justified because of his contacts with Russia, and they argue that the FBI and Justice Department followed proper procedure in seeking and getting the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to approve the warrant.

In a statement Saturday, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Adam Schiff, said the applications “underscore the legitimate concern FBI had about Page’s activities as it was investigating Russia’s interference.”

“These documents affirm that our nation faced a profound counterintelligence threat prior to the 2016 election, and the Department of Justice and FBI took appropriate steps to investigate whether any U.S. persons were acting as an agent of a foreign power,” Schiff said.

The dispute over Page’s FISA warrant has been previously fought in the form of dueling memos that Nunes and Schiff issued earlier this year.

Nunes’ memo, which was cited by President Donald Trump in his attacks on the Mueller investigation, alleges that the author of the dossier, ex-British intelligence agent Christopher Steele, harbored anti-Trump motivations that were not disclosed in the FISA application.

Worse, the memo alleges, the FISA court was not told that Steele’s dossier was funded through a law firm by the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign.

Democrats responded with their own memo, which argued that the FBI’s interest in Page predated the FBI’s knowledge of the Steele dossier. It also argues that it was not the dossier and the Page FISA warrant that prompted the FBI’s counterintelligence investigation into Russia, but rather an earlier conversation that former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos had with an Australian diplomat about alleged Russian dirt on Clinton.

The material in a FISA warrant is considered highly classified, and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court proceedings are also conducted in secret.

But after Nunes issued a subpoena to gain access to the documents, he used a House procedure to make public classified materials, so long as the White House did not object.

The release of some information related to the Page FISA document in both the Republican and Democratic memos led to lawsuits from groups like Judicial Watch seeking more information from the Page FISA warrant.

Newly Released Files Show The FBI Believed Carter Page Collaborated With Russia Before The 2016 Election

By Grace Wyler

[BuzzFeed](#), July 22, 2018

The FBI believed in 2016 that Carter Page, a one-time foreign policy aide for Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, had “been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government” in its efforts to meddle in the 2016 election, according to an application the agency filed with a secret foreign surveillance court just weeks before the election.

The revelation is contained in more than 400 pages of previously classified documents the Justice Department released late Saturday related to the FBI’s applications to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court seeking permission to wiretap Page. The documents — which include the FBI’s original application to the court in the fall of 2016 and three subsequent renewal applications — were made public in response to a lawsuit from several media organizations under the Freedom of Information Act.

They are believed to be the first application for surveillance ever released to the public in the 40-year history of the FISA court.

“The F.B.I. believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government,” the initial application states. Then after a redacted line, it says “undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law. Mr. Page is a former foreign policy adviser to a candidate for U.S. president.”

The documents, which remain heavily redacted, provide few details about why law enforcement agents believed Page was participating in Russian election meddling when the FBI first began its surveillance in October 2016.

And though the three subsequent applications to continue surveillance grew in volume — 79 pages, 91

pages, and 101 pages, compared to the original 66-page application — they provide little information about the scope of the FBI's investigation into Page, and few, if any, details about what law enforcement agencies had gleaned about the former Trump campaign adviser over the course of nearly a year of surveilling him.

However, the unredacted portions of the documents show that the FBI believed Page had “established relationships with Russian government officials, including Russian intelligence officers,” and that “the Russian government's efforts are being coordinated with Page and perhaps other individuals associated with” the Trump campaign.”

Page, who has not been charged with any crimes as a result of the investigation into Russian election meddling, has denied being a Russian agent. In a tweet Saturday, he accused the federal government of “civil rights abuses,” and said the documents show the FBI’s “complete ignorance” regarding Russia.

The release of the FBI’s FISA application is sure to inflame the contentious debate over the agency’s warrant for Page’s surveillance, which Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee have blasted as having been improperly obtained. Democrats have argued that the FBI acted appropriately in obtaining the warrant from the FISA court. But until now, the underlying documents justifying either argument had not been made public.

“Even in redacted form, the initial FISA application and three renewals underscore the legitimate concern [the] FBI had about Page’s activities as it was investigating Russia’s interference,” Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said Saturday. He added, “While I’m pleased that these conspiracy theories are finally being put to rest, the release of these materials during a pending investigation should not have happened.”

Central to the GOP’s criticism of the FISA warrant has been the FBI’s use of information compiled in a dossier authored by former British MI6 intelligence official Christopher Steele. A memo published by Republican staff on the House Intelligence Committee this February contended that officials did not adequately explain to the FISA court judge that the application relied on research from Steele that was partially funded by the Democratic National Committee and the presidential campaign for Hillary Clinton.

The dossier was first published by BuzzFeed News last January after security officials had briefed both then-president Barack Obama and Trump about it.

The records released Saturday confirm that the FBI relied on intelligence collected by Steele, who is referred to in the FISA application as “Source #1.”

Though the application acknowledges that Steele was hired by a US law firm to conduct research into Trump’s ties to Russia that could “be used to discredit” his campaign, it states that Steele was not informed of “the motivations behind his research,” and that his reporting “has been corroborated.”

The application also states that the FBI considered Steele a reliable source and believed his reports to be credible.

In a pair of early morning tweets Sunday, Trump acknowledged the release of the documents and stated that the documents “confirm with little doubt that the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts.”

“Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC,” the president wrote in a second tweet. “Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!”

President Trump Claims FISA Court Documents Point To ‘Illegal Scam’ At FBI

By John Fritze

[USA Today](#), July 22, 2018

President Donald Trump is describing the release of hundreds of pages of documents sent to a secret federal surveillance court about a former campaign aide as confirming his position that the Justice Department “misled the courts.”

Trump said the documents, used to request a wiretap of former campaign aide Carter Page, suggested “An illegal Scam” at the Justice Department.

“Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC,” Trump wrote Sunday on Twitter. “Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie.”

Trump said the application for a wiretap to the surveillance court “are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of “Justice” and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!”

The records confirm that the FBI based its surveillance requests in part on the work of Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer hired by a research firm working for Clinton. But agents disclosed to the court that Steele “was likely looking for information that could be used to discredit” Trump’s campaign.

And the records show the FBI had broader suspicions – and more evidence – about Page’s possible ties to the Russian government. In applying for

permission to wiretap him, investigators wrote that Page “has relationships with Russian Government officials, including Russian intelligence officers.”

‘Witch Hunt Rigged’: Trump Sees ‘Illegal Spying’ After Carter Page FISA Warrant Released

By Saagar Enjeti

[Daily Caller](#), July 22, 2018

President Donald Trump accused the FBI of illegally spying on associates of his campaign after the Department of Justice released the FISA warrant application submitted for Carter Page.

The president animatedly tweeted about the FISA warrant after its release citing analysis from pundits and analysts on the Fox News Channel. (RELATED: DOJ Releases Carter Page FISA Applications)

“The FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government,” the warrant said, referencing Page’s past work for the Trump 2016 campaign. The FISA warrant demonstrated the long-standing claims from conservative lawmakers that the unverified opposition research dossier compiled by Christopher Steele played a key role in the FISA warrant application.

After A Week Of Walkbacks, Trump Returns To Russia Doubting

By Zeke Miller

[Associated Press](#), July 21, 2018

Capping a week of drama, back tracking, a double negative and blistering statements from allies about his attitude toward Russian election interference, President Donald Trump on Sunday was back to referring to “a big hoax.”

Trump spent days trying to reassure the country that he accepts that the longtime foe interfered in the 2016 election after his public undermining of U.S. intelligence agencies in Helsinki while standing alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin. But Trump cast doubt once again in a Sunday tweet, diminishing at least the significance, if not the existence, of the interference and the U.S. investigation into Russia’s actions.

“So President Obama knew about Russia before the Election,” Trump tweeted. “Why didn’t he do something about it? Why didn’t he tell our campaign? Because it is all a big hoax, that’s why, and he thought Crooked Hillary was going to win!!!”

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was suggesting that the entire notion of Russian interference — U.S. intelligence agencies unanimously concur it took

place and Trump reluctantly accepted their assessment amid the firestorm — was fraudulent, or just the investigation of potential collusion by Trump associates with Russian agents.

Either way, it appeared to keep alive a controversy that had separated Trump from aides and longtime political supporters and brought some of the most striking rebukes of his tenure in the Oval Office.

“The evidence is overwhelming and the president needs to say that and act like it,” said Republican Rep. Trey Gowdy, the chairman of the House Oversight Committee, in an interview with “Fox News Sunday” aired hours before Trump’s tweet.

Two Trump associates, former national security adviser Mike Flynn and campaign foreign policy aide George Papadopoulos, pleaded guilty last year to charges brought by special counsel Robert Mueller alleging they had lied to the FBI about their Russia contacts.

Trump’s latest missive came hours after he asserted without evidence that newly released documents relating to the wiretapping of his onetime campaign adviser Carter Page “confirm with little doubt” that intelligence agencies misled the court that approved the warrant.

But lawmakers from both political parties said that the documents don’t show wrongdoing and that they even appear to undermine some previous claims by top Republicans on the basis for obtaining a warrant against Page.

Visible portions of the heavily redacted documents, released Saturday under the Freedom of Information Act, show the FBI telling the court that Page “has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government.” The agency also told the court that “the FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.”

The documents were part of officials’ application for a warrant to the secretive foreign intelligence surveillance court, which signed off on surveilling Page.

Trump tweeted Sunday on the documents: “As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!”

The release appears to undercut some of the contentions in a memo prepared by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Devin Nunes earlier this year. Nunes, R-Calif., and other Republicans had said that anti-Trump research in a dossier prepared by former British intelligence agent Christopher Steele and paid for by Democrats was used inappropriately to obtain the warrant on Page.

While the documents confirm that the FBI relied, in part, on information from Steele to obtain the initial warrant, they also show how the FBI informed the court of his likely motivation.

A page-long footnote in the warrant application lays out the FBI's assessment of Steele's history and the likely interest of his backer, adding that despite the political concern, the bureau believed at least some of his report to be "credible."

Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff of California, a ranking member on the House Intelligence Committee, said the documents detail "just why the FBI was so concerned that Carter Page might be acting as an agent of a foreign power."

"It was a solid application and renewals signed by four different judges appointed by three different Republican presidents," Schiff said on ABC's "This Week."

In a statement late Sunday, Nunes said the documents supported his committee's view "that unverified information from the Steele dossier formed an essential part of all the FISA applications on Carter Page. It proves that the FBI used outright political propaganda to spy on an American citizen during the election."

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida also broke with Trump, saying he didn't think the FBI did anything wrong in obtaining warrants against Page.

"I have a different view on this issue than the president and the White House," Rubio said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." "They did not spy on the campaign from anything and everything that I have seen. You have an individual here who has openly bragged about his ties to Russia and Russians."

On Sunday, Page said on CNN's "State of the Union": "I've never been the agent of a foreign power."

In a 2013 letter, Page had described himself as an "informal adviser" to the Kremlin but now said "it's really spin" to call him an adviser.

Page has not been charged with a crime, but he has been interviewed by the FBI and congressional investigators about his ties to Russia. White House officials have argued that Page, announced by the president in early 2016 as a foreign policy adviser, played only a minor role in the Trump campaign.

The documents released Saturday include the FBI's October 2016 request to surveil Page and several renewal applications. It marks the first time in the more than 40-year history of the highly secretive court that underlying documents for a warrant have been released.

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Release Of Carter Page Surveillance Documents Reignites Debate

By Brett Samuels

[The Hill](#), July 22, 2018

The Justice Department's release of documents related to the surveillance of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page is reigniting the debate over how government officials acquired their warrant, and giving new life to President Trump's unsupported claim that they spied on his campaign.

Page on Sunday appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," where he repeatedly dismissed the fresh trove of documents as "spin" and "misleading," and asserted he has never been an agent for a foreign power.

"It's really spin. I mean, I sat in on some meetings. But to call me an adviser, I think, is way over the top," Page said, despite penning a letter in 2013 in which he called himself an "informal adviser" to the Kremlin.

"This is really nothing," Page added. "Just an attempt to distract from the real crimes that are shown in this misleading document."

However, when pressed, Page declined to directly answer whether he has relationships with Russian officials.

The Justice Department late Saturday released documents related to surveillance warrants on Page. The heavily redacted materials laid out, in part, the FBI's belief that Page had established relationships and was potentially collaborating with Russian government officials.

While the public release of a surveillance application marked an unprecedented step, it did little to quell the furor over how law enforcement obtained a warrant to surveil Page.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said on CBS's "Face the Nation" that the surveillance was "not at all" justified.

"If the dossier is the reason you issued the warrant, it was a bunch of garbage," Graham said.

"The dossier has proven to be a bunch of garbage," he added, referencing the so-called "Steele Dossier" that was used in part to acquire the surveillance warrant.

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), meanwhile, argued that the application was built on more evidence than just the dossier.

"I know those applications set out in some detail, a lot of which unfortunately is redacted, just why the FBI was so concerned that Carter Page might be acting as an agent of a foreign power," Schiff said on ABC's "This Week."

"It was a solid application and renewals signed by four different judges appointed by three different Republican presidents," Schiff added.

President Trump took to Twitter earlier Sunday morning to claim the additional documents prove his campaign "was illegally being spied upon."

"Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!" Trump tweeted.

Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

Trump did not specify evidence revealed in the surveillance application to support his claim, however. His comments mark the latest instance in which he has been at odds with his own Justice Department and intelligence officials.

The heavily redacted materials indicated that the FBI "believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government... to undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law."

The application shows that the FBI told the court that it believed the person who hired Steele to compile the dossier was seeking information to damage Trump. However, officials told the court it found the information to be "credible."

Additionally, the application was based on information beyond what was included in the Steele Dossier, and was approved by four were appointed by Republican presidents.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) rebuffed Trump's claims during two separate appearances early Sunday, arguing the Department of Justice had legitimate reason to look into Page.

The senator noted that Page had spoken in the past about his connections to Russian officials, and said he likely raised eyebrows among law enforcement when he began associating with the Trump campaign.

"I don't believe that them looking into Carter Page means they were spying on the campaign. I also don't believe it proves anything about collusion or anything like that," Rubio said on "State of the Union."

"I don't think it's part of any broader plot," he added. "The only plot here is the plot to interfere and our elections by the Russians."

Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.), meanwhile, agreed with Rubio that Page likely drew FBI interest before he joined the 2016 campaign. But he was firm in his

criticism that the Steele dossier played a role in acquiring a surveillance warrant.

He took issue with the FBI's lack of transparency on how the Steele dossier was funded, and argued the agency should have disclosed that it was funded by the Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee (DNC) during the 2016 campaign.

"I don't have an issue with looking into people that have cozy relationships with Russia. That's fine. That's what law enforcement supposed to do," Gowdy said on "Fox News Sunday."

"I do have an issue when you rely on political opposition research that is unvetted and you represent that to a court and use it to spy on an American," he added.

Without Evidence, Trump Claims Documents Confirm Misconduct

By Zeke Miller

[Associated Press](#), July 22, 2018

President Donald Trump asserted without evidence Sunday that newly released documents relating to the wiretapping of his onetime campaign adviser Carter Page "confirm with little doubt" that intelligence agencies misled the court that approved the warrant.

But lawmakers from both political parties said that the documents don't show wrongdoing and that they even appear to undermine some previous claims by top Republicans on the basis for obtaining a warrant against Page.

Visible portions of the heavily redacted documents, released Saturday under the Freedom of Information Act, show the FBI telling the court that Page "has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government." The agency also told the court that "the FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government."

The documents were part of officials' application for a warrant to the secretive foreign intelligence surveillance court, which signed off on surveilling Page.

Trump tweeted Sunday on the documents: "As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of 'Justice' and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!"

The release appears to undercut some of the contentions in a memo prepared by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Devin Nunes earlier this year. Nunes, R-Calif., and other Republicans had said that anti-Trump research in a dossier prepared by former British intelligence agent Christopher Steele and paid for

by Democrats was used inappropriately to obtain the warrant on Page.

While the documents confirm that the FBI relied, in part, on information from Steele to obtain the initial warrant, they also show how the FBI informed the court of his likely motivation.

A page-long footnote in the warrant application lays out the FBI's assessment of Steele's history and the likely interest of his backer, adding that despite the political concern, the bureau believed at least some of his report to be "credible."

Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff of California, a ranking member on the House Intelligence Committee, said the documents detail "just why the FBI was so concerned that Carter Page might be acting as an agent of a foreign power."

"It was a solid application and renewals signed by four different judges appointed by three different Republican presidents," Schiff said on ABC's "This Week."

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida also broke with Trump, saying he didn't think the FBI did anything wrong in obtaining warrants against Page.

"I have a different view on this issue than the president and the White House," Rubio said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." "They did not spy on the campaign from anything and everything that I have seen. You have an individual here who has openly bragged about his ties to Russia and Russians."

On Sunday, Page said on CNN's "State of the Union": "I've never been the agent of a foreign power."

In a 2013 letter, Page had described himself as an "informal adviser" to the Kremlin but now said "it's really spin" to call him an adviser.

Page has not been charged with a crime, but he has been interviewed by the FBI and congressional investigators about his ties to Russia. White House officials have argued that Page, announced by the president in early 2016 as a foreign policy adviser, played only a minor role in the Trump campaign. Another former campaign policy aide, George Papadopoulos, pleaded guilty last year to charges brought by special counsel Robert Mueller alleging he had lied to the FBI about his Russia contacts. He is now cooperating with Mueller's expansive probe.

The documents released Saturday include the FBI's October 2016 request to surveil Page and several renewal applications. It marks the first time in the more than 40-year history of the highly-secretive court that underlying documents for a warrant have been released.

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Without Evidence, Trump Claims Vindication From Release Of Carter Page Documents

By Katie Rogers And Emily Cochrane
[New York Times](#), July 22, 2018

President Trump claimed without evidence on Sunday that his administration's release of top-secret documents related to the surveillance of a former campaign aide had confirmed that the Justice Department and the F.B.I. "misled the courts" in the early stages of the Russia investigation.

"Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter, referring to the Democratic National Committee.

In a series of early-morning tweets, Mr. Trump left unmentioned how the documents laid out in stark detail why the F.B.I. was interested in the former campaign adviser, Carter Page: "The F.B.I. believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government." The documents also said Mr. Page had "established relationships with Russian government officials, including Russian intelligence officers," and had been "collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government."

Those assessments were included in an October 2016 application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap Mr. Page. The New York Times and other news outlets obtained the application and several renewals through Freedom of Information Act lawsuits. The president had declassified their existence last year.

On Sunday morning, Mr. Page dismissed the claims in the documents. "I've never been an agent of a foreign power in any — by any stretch of the imagination," Mr. Page said on CNN's "State of the Union."

He played down a letter he wrote in 2013 in which he described himself as "an informal adviser to the staff of the Kremlin."

"I sat in on some meetings, but to call me an adviser I think is way over the top," Mr. Page said. "This is really nothing, and just an attempt to distract from the real crimes that are shown in this misleading document."

Some Republican lawmakers and Trump associates also minimized the role of Mr. Page, who advised the Trump team on foreign policy. "Carter Page is more like Inspector Gadget than he is Jason Bourne or James Bond," Representative Trey Gowdy, Republican of South Carolina and the chairman of the House Oversight Committee, said on "Fox News Sunday." "I have not seen one scintilla of evidence that

this president colluded, conspired, confederated with Russia.”

But some Republicans pushed back against the president. Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, rejected Mr. Trump’s insinuation that the wiretapping of Mr. Page equated to surveillance of the campaign. “I don’t believe that them looking into Carter Page means they were spying on the campaign,” Mr. Rubio said on “Fox News Sunday.”

“The only plot is to interfere in the election by the Russians,” he added.

Since returning from a widely criticized meeting with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in Helsinki, Finland, Mr. Trump has fixated on election interference, but he has been ready to place blame not on the Russians but on the Democrats. On the plane ride home from Finland, Mr. Trump asked advisers once again about the Democratic National Committee server that was hacked — he had raised the server issue while standing next to Mr. Putin — and why cyberintruders had not penetrated Republican National Committee systems.

Supporters of Mr. Trump, including Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee, have seized on the fact that the F.B.I., in making the case to judges that Mr. Page might be a Russian agent, used some claims included in a notorious Democratic-funded dossier compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence agent.

Republicans’ criticism has centered on the fact that the F.B.I. used material from the dossier without telling the court that the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign, by name, had funded the research.

“I don’t have an issue with looking into people that have cozy relationships with Russia,” Mr. Gowdy said. “I do have an issue when you rely on unvetted political opposition research.”

But the application shows that the F.B.I. acknowledged to the court that it believed that the person who hired Mr. Steele was looking for information to discredit Mr. Trump’s campaign, later emphasizing that regardless of Mr. Steele’s reason for conducting research into Mr. Trump’s ties to Russia, it believed his reporting about Mr. Page was credible.

The application also shows that the Justice Department’s general practice in surveillance applications was not to specifically name Americans or American organizations. For example, it referred to Mr. Trump not by name but as “Candidate #1,” despite noting in renewal applications that this person had since become president.

Mr. Trump and some of his supporters nevertheless claimed vindication. In another tweet on

Sunday, the president quoted a Fox News commentator, Andrew McCarthy, as saying: “I said this could never happen. This is so bad that they should be looking at the judges who signed off on this stuff, not just the people who gave it. It is so bad it screams out at you.”

The materials revealed that the judges who signed off on the wiretapping of Mr. Page were all appointed by Republican presidents. David Kris, an expert on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act who served in the Bush and Obama administrations, dismissed the notion that those judges had been misled.

“Now we can see that the footnote disclosing Steele’s possible bias takes up more than a full page in the applications, so there is literally no way the FISA Court could have missed it,” he wrote on the blog Lawfare. “The F.B.I. gave the court enough information to evaluate Steele’s credibility.”

In his tweets, Mr. Trump focused in part on the many redactions in the documents, seeming to take those as further proof that his campaign had been illegally surveilled.

Steve Vladeck, a professor who specializes in national security law at the University of Texas School of Law, said the president was zeroing in on what was redacted in the documents rather than the content of the application itself.

“The great irony here is that no one’s actually disputing the core allegation in the application,” Mr. Vladeck said in interview, “which is that there was at least probable cause to believe Carter Page was working as an agent of a foreign power.”

In his tweets, the president, Mr. Vladeck said, also seemed to be shifting the focus of his criticism from the F.B.I. to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. Warrant applications, generated at early stages of an investigation, tend to be “one-sided,” Mr. Vladeck said, and officials may not be telling the court every single thing they know when filing them.

“He’s focusing on the imperfections of the application, of which there are many because these documents tend not to be perfect,” Mr. Vladeck said. “Out of context, these individual imperfections may look a lot more sinister.”

But, he added, the application still contained “a substantial amount of information provided to four different Republican-appointed FISA court judges who established probable cause.”

While Mr. Trump did not elaborate on Sunday on why he felt that the FISA application had proved his accusations, he had claimed similar vindication in February when he endorsed highly contentious accusations by Republicans on the House Intelligence

Committee that the F.B.I. had misused its surveillance powers in the Page case.

A memo issued at the time by Republicans on the committee drew on information in the surveillance documents, though Democrats said the Republicans made distorted claims to protect Mr. Trump and try to undermine the Russia inquiry. That memo, like the documents released on Saturday, did nothing to clear Mr. Trump of either collusion or obstruction, the lines of inquiry being pursued by the special counsel.

In the nearly two years since the initial application was filed, Mr. Page has not been charged with any crime. And as Mr. Trump and some Republican lawmakers persistently deplore the special counsel's investigation into Russian election interference as a "witch hunt," the wiretapping of Mr. Page has emerged as an opportunity to sow doubt about the motives of the investigation.

Mr. Trump sent his Twitter posts before he returned to Washington after visiting his golf course in Bedminster, N.J. The president also praised Judicial Watch, the conservative advocacy group known for its relentless legal pursuit of the Clintons, for obtaining the documents. But Mr. Trump disregarded the fact that the news organizations, including The Times, had sought release of the documents under several Freedom of Information Act lawsuits.

Trump Says His Campaign Was Spied Upon Illegally, Offers No Evidence

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Carter Page Surveillance Documents Set Off New Skirmish

The release of heavily redacted warrants to monitor the former Trump adviser reignite partisan battle

By Del Quentin Wilber And Byron Tau

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump's Claim Of FBI 'Illegal Scam' Puts Him At Odds With Lawmakers, Including Republicans

By Tom Howell Jr.

[Washington Times](#), July 22, 2018

President Trump on Sunday said top-secret documents prove the FBI spied on his 2016 campaign in an "illegal scam," putting him at odds with Capitol Hill lawmakers, including Republicans, who say federal authorities were justified in tracking foreign policy adviser Carter Page.

In a series of tweets, the president argued heavily redacted documents — released late Saturday — show that agents misled the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court by using a dossier partly funded by the Hillary Clinton campaign to obtain a warrant to snoop on Mr. Page.

"Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the [Democratic National Committee]," he tweeted.

He quoted pundits who said the "dirty dossier" was merely a predicate to snoop on the campaign through Mr. Page.

"ILLEGAL!" Mr. Trump tweeted.

Mr. Page was the subject of a "targeted recruitment" by the Russian government, according to the previously top-secret documents used by the FBI to obtain a wiretap warrant of the former campaign aide.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said despite Mr. Trump's protests, the FBI had good reason to track Mr. Page, who acknowledged being an informal advisor to the Kremlin and had traveled to Russia.

"It was a solid application and renewals [were] signed by four different judges appointed by three different Republican presidents," Mr. Schiff told ABC's This Week.

Sen. Marco Rubio, Florida Republican, said Mr. Page was on the FBI's screen before the campaign. When Mr. Page got closer to the orbit of the Trump campaign, the FBI got interested and applied for the snooping warrant, the senator said.

"I think that's different from spying on the campaign," he told CBS's Face the Nation.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy also said it's OK to look into people who might have questionable ties to Russia, but that the FBI should have been clearer about its reliance on unvetted information in a dossier funded by the Clinton campaign.

Both Mr. Gowdy, South Carolina Republican, and Mr. Rubio downplayed Mr. Page's role in the 2016 campaign,

as the story unfolds like a spy novel.

Mr. Gowdy said Mr. Page was "more like Inspector Gadget than he is like Jason Bourne or James Bond."

Still, Mr. Trump injected drama into the fight by tweeting that his campaign was “being illegally spied upon.”

He also defended his performance during a recent summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“I had a GREAT meeting with Putin and the Fake News used every bit of their energy to try and disparage it. So bad for our country!” Mr. Trump said Sunday on Twitter.

Mr. Trump is still dealing with the fallout of his widely panned press conference in Helsinki, where he held a closed-door meeting with the Russian leader and then appeared to accept Mr. Putin’s claim that he didn’t interfere in the last election and is not meddling in the run-up to the mid-terms.

The president had to walk back some of his comments upon returning to the U.S.

Mr. Rubio said Mr. Trump left a poor impression by failing to stand up to Mr. Putin in person.

“I wish it would have gone differently,” he told CNN’s State of the Union.

Marco Rubio: FBI Did Nothing Wrong By Spying On Carter Page

By Josh Siegel

[Washington Examiner](#), July 22, 2018

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said Sunday the FBI did nothing wrong in convincing the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to allow the government to surveil former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

“I don’t think they did anything wrong,” Rubio told Jake Tapper on CNN’s “State of the Union.” “I think they went to the court and got the judges to approve it.”

Late Saturday evening, the Justice Department released top-secret documents related to the surveillance warrants used to wiretap Page under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The heavily redacted documents showed the FBI believed Page was collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government.

The documents confirm the FBI based its surveillance requests to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court in part on a dossier compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer hired by a research firm funded in part by former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s campaign and the Democratic National Committee.

Republicans have accused the FBI of relying too heavily on the Steele dossier.

But Rubio said Sunday the FBI was right to be concerned about Page, based on his past relationship with Russia.

“He is a guy, even before the campaign — this is not Trump related — who went around bragging about his connections in Russia,” Rubio said of Page. “They [the FBI] knew who he was before the campaign. Then you see the guy gravitating around a leading campaign, and then other things came up on the screen, and said, ‘we’ve got to look at this guy.’ That’s what the FISA application lays out.”

The released documents show the FBI told the court it considered Steele a trusted, reliable source. The FBI told the court it believed the source of funding for the Steele research was “likely looking for information that could be used to discredit” Trump, even if it didn’t directly name the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee as being behind it.

Democrats note the application also included evidence against Page unrelated to the Steele dossier. Rubio said he agreed with this assessment.

“There was a lot of reasons unrelated to the dossier for why they wanted to look at Carter Page,” Rubio said.

Rubio added the surveillance is “not part of any broader plot” by the FBI to undermine Trump as some Trump allies in Congress have alleged.

“The only plot is to interfere in the election by the Russians,” he said. “I don’t believe that them looking into Carter Page means they were spying on the campaign. I also don’t believe it proves anything about collusion or anything like that.”

Rubio Refutes Trump’s Tweets On Carter Page, Saying FBI Did Not Spy On Trump Campaign

[CBS News](#), July 22, 2018

Sen. Marco Rubio is refuting President Trump’s latest claims that his campaign was being “illegally” spied on following the FBI’s release of heavily redacted documents detailing the surveillance of former Trump campaign aide Carter Page.

The Florida Republican, speaking with “Face the Nation” on Sunday, said that “anything and everything” he’s seen while serving on the Senate Intelligence Committee indicates the FBI “did not spy on the campaign.”

“You have an individual here who has openly bragged about his ties to Russia and Russians and he’s never – I don’t think Carter Page has ever said he’s a spy, but he has certainly talked about it,” Rubio said. When asked if the information collected from Page using a FISA court order was justified, Rubio told “Face the Nation” moderator Margaret Brennan that the FBI had

“reason to believe” Page was a person of interest given his openness about his contacts with Russians.

Transcript: Sen. Marco Rubio on “Face the Nation,” July 22, 2018

Rubio on family separation: “We don’t have the capacity to hold families together”

Rubio on Trump’s messaging on Russian meddling: “Not a good moment for the administration”

“I think that’s different from spying on a campaign, in fact, that the Trump campaign has said on numerous occasions that Carter Page was not a major player in their campaign,” Rubio said. “So, you know, based on that statement alone you would conclude that yes, they were looking into this one individual but an individual the campaign themselves said was not a big part of their efforts. Therefore I wouldn’t consider that spying on a campaign.”

Rubio’s comments come in contrast with the president’s tweets Sunday morning, in which he claimed that Page was surveilled “for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC.” He claimed that the documents “with little doubt that the Department of Justice and FBI misled the courts.”

Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!

Page has repeatedly denied acting as an agent for the Russian government. His surveillance has become fodder for conservatives who have criticized the Justice Department and FBI for wiretapping Page.

President Trump, Allies Dismiss Revelations In New Court Documents Tied To Russia Probe

By John Fritze And Brad Heath

[USA Today](#), July 22, 2018

President Donald Trump and his allies sought Sunday to contain the fallout from the release of hundreds of pages of top-secret court records documenting the FBI’s investigation into a former campaign aide’s ties to Russia.

Responding to lawsuits filed by USA TODAY and other media organizations, the FBI on Saturday made public more than 400 pages of material filed with a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court to request a wiretap on Carter Page, a one-time Trump campaign aide who investigators believed was collaborating with Moscow.

Though vast portions of the documents were redacted, they provided new detail about how the FBI approached the early phases of the probe into Russian interference. The filings also weighed into a partisan debate over how much of the FBI’s evidence was based on the work of a former British intelligence officer with ties to Hillary Clinton.

Trump and other Republicans focused on the fact that the agent’s controversial “dossier” alleging links between Russia and Trump’s campaign made up part of the evidence investigators used to obtain a wiretap on Page. The British agent, Christopher Steele, was hired by a research firm working for Clinton’s presidential campaign.

Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., the chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said anyone reading the documents could “see the amount of reliance they placed on this product funded by Hillary Clinton’s campaign and the DNC.”

Gowdy, speaking on “Fox News Sunday,” dismissed Trump’s connection to Page, say he is “more like Inspector Gadget than he is Jason Bourne or James Bond.”

In a series of posts on Twitter, the president blasted his Justice Department, arguing that the documents pointed to an “illegal scam” perpetrated by the FBI.

“As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted,” Trump wrote, “but confirm with little doubt that the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts.”

The president’s reaction put him at odds with senior members of his own Justice Department. The documents show two requests to extend the surveillance of Page were approved by his appointees in the department, including Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

Democrats and some Republicans noted the FBI disclosed in their filings that Steele “was likely looking for information that could be used to discredit” Trump’s campaign. Despite that fact, investigators said they believed – based on previous interactions with Steele – that his report was credible.

The applications also suggest the FBI had broader suspicions about Page and his potential ties to the Russian government.

“It was a solid application and renewals signed by four different judges,” Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, told ABC’s “This Week.”

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said he didn’t see any indication in the court records that the Justice Department had done anything wrong.

"They went to the court. They got the judges to approve it," Rubio said on CNN's "State of the Union." "And there was a lot of reasons unrelated to the dossier for why they wanted to look at Carter Page."

Four federal judges, all appointed by Republican presidents, approved the surveillance requests, each finding the government had shown "probable cause" that Page was acting as an agent of Russia.

Page, a former campaign aide to Trump, denied Sunday that he collaborated with the Russian government to interfere with the election. Speaking for the first time since the documents were made public, Page told CNN the allegations were "a complete joke." Page has not been charged with a crime, despite the extended surveillance.

"This is so ridiculous," he said. "I've never been an agent of a foreign power."

Pressed by CNN's Jake Tapper about previous remarks in which he described himself as an "informal adviser" to Russia, Page dismissed his role.

"I sat in on some meetings," he said.

The FBI began monitoring Page in October 2016. That surveillance was carried out under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows the government to monitor communications when it can persuade a judge that someone is working as an agent of a foreign power. The documents show the surveillance continued last year.

Investigators said that they had collected evidence that "the Russian Government's efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. Presidential election were being coordinated with Page and perhaps other individuals associated with" Trump's campaign.

"Totally false," Page said on CNN. "I might have participated in a few meetings. It's really spin."

The documents were made public after a week in which the White House was repeatedly forced to walk back comments Trump made about Russia, including during a joint appearance with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.

During a joint news conference last week, Trump appeared to accept Putin's denial of Russia's attempt to influence the election, but later clarified he thought Moscow was involved. The White House then clarified that Trump believes Russia is still attempting to target U.S. elections after the president appeared to answer a reporter's question hours earlier saying Russia is not.

USA TODAY and the James Madison Project, a nonpartisan organization that promotes government accountability, filed a lawsuit last year under the Freedom of Information Act seeking records about surveillance of Trump's campaign. The suit came after

Trump claimed the Obama administration "wire-tapped" Trump Tower before the election.

Trump: Carter Page Surveillance Applications 'Confirm' Officials 'Misled The Courts'

By Kyle Balluck

[The Hill](#), July 22, 2018

President Trump said early Sunday that documents related to surveillance warrants on former campaign adviser Carter Page "confirm with little doubt" that officials "misled the courts."

"Congratulations to @JudicialWatch and @TomFitton on being successful in getting the Carter Page [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] FISA documents. As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of 'Justice' and FBI misled the courts," he tweeted. "Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!"

Congratulations to @JudicialWatch and @TomFitton on being successful in getting the Carter Page FISA documents. As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of "Justice" and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

"Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!" he said in a subsequent tweet.

Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

The heavily redacted materials released by the Department of Justice (DOJ) on Saturday indicate that the FBI "believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government ... to undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law."

The initial application for a surveillance warrant and several renewal applications are included in more than 400 pages of documents, which have been at the heart of a controversy over alleged FBI bias against Trump and his campaign.

Page has denied that he acted improperly while interacting with Russian officials during the 2016 campaign. He told Fox News last year that he “did nothing that could even be possibly viewed as helping them in any way.”

“I’m having trouble finding any small bit of this document that rises above complete ignorance and/or insanity,” he told The Hill on Saturday following the release of the documents.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), however, said in a statement that the documents “provide clear evidence of ‘Russia’s coordination with Carter Page,’ a high-ranking Trump campaign official, ‘to undermine and improperly and illegally influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election.’”

Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee in February asserted in a now-declassified memo that senior FBI and DOJ officials abused their authority to spy on Page. The Republicans argued that information from the so-called Steele dossier was “essential” to the acquisition of warrants on Page. The Clinton campaign partly funded that dossier, which includes a series of salacious allegations about Trump’s ties to Russia.

The panel’s Democrats said weeks later that the DOJ and FBI were justified in their surveillance of Page.

The president of Judicial Watch, which was one of the organizations that had requested to obtain the documents under the Freedom of Information Act, said on Saturday that the documents appear to “confirm the FBI and DoJ misled the courts in withholding info about Clinton-DNC being behind the info used to get the FISA warrant.”

Tom Fitton also called on Trump to intervene and declassify the redacted material.

Administration Releases Documents About Former Trump Adviser

[Associated Press](#), July 22, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Saturday released a set of documents once deemed top secret relating to the wiretapping of a onetime adviser to Donald Trump’s presidential campaign.

The New York Times reported that the documents involving former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page were released to the Times and several other media organizations that had filed Freedom of Information Act lawsuits to obtain them. The FBI later posted the documents to its FOIA website online.

The materials include an October 2016 application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap Page as well as several renewal applications, the Times

reported. It is highly unusual for documents related to FISA wiretap applications to be released.

While the documents were heavily redacted in places, the Times reported that visible portions of the documents show the FBI telling the intelligence court that Page “has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government.” The agency also told the court that “the FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.”

Page has denied being a Russian agent.

After a redaction, the Times reported that the application to wiretap Page included a partial sentence: “... undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law.”

The surveillance of Page became a contentious matter between Republican and Democratic lawmakers earlier this year. Republicans alleged the FBI had abused its surveillance powers and improperly obtained the warrant, a charge that Democrats rebutted as both sides characterized the documents in different ways. The documents, meanwhile, remained out of public view.

House Democrats were quick to say that the documents bolstered their arguments.

“For more than a year, House Republicans have bullied the Department of Justice and FBI to release highly sensitive documents to derail the Special Counsel’s and other legitimate national security investigations and cover for the President,” House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said in a statement. “For the sake of our national security and our democracy, these vital investigations must be allowed to continue unhindered by Republican interference. The GOP must cease their attacks on our law enforcement and intelligence communities, and finally decide where their loyalty lies.”

Rep. Adam Schiff, the California Democrat who is the ranking member of the House intelligence committee, said the documents underscore the “legitimate concern” the FBI had about Page’s activities. Yet Schiff said the materials shouldn’t have been released during an ongoing investigation because of national security. He blamed Trump for making public House Republicans’ initial memo about the FISA applications, a move by Trump that the congressman called “nakedly political and self-interested, and designed to to (sic) interfere with the Special Counsel’s investigation.”

FBI Documents: <https://vault.fbi.gov/d1-release>

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Justice Dept Releases Surveillance Applications For Former Trump Aide

By Olivia Beavers

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

The Department of Justice (DOJ) on Saturday released documents related to the surveillance warrants on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page as part of the federal investigation into the Trump campaign and Russia.

The documents have been at the heart of a controversy over alleged bias at the FBI.

The heavily redacted application materials – 412 pages, including an initial application and several applications to renew the surveillance – indicate that the FBI “believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government ... to undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law.”

Conservatives have sought to cast doubt on the information used as the basis for acquiring the warrants on Page and are eager to review details of the FISA warrants. Page himself has also reportedly called for the release of the FISA application that he calls “illegitimate.”

The DOJ in April said it was “processing for potential redaction and release certain [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] materials related to Carter Page,” after the conservative watchdog group Judicial Watch filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit seeking the release of such records. The Justice Department set the deadline for Friday, July 20, 2018, according to court documents.

Judicial Watch, however, is not the only group vying for these highly sought-after documents.

In February, Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee voted along party lines to release a memo claiming the DOJ abused the FISA warrant process in order to hurt President Trump's campaign, claiming Page's surveillance warrant was based entirely on the controversial “Steele” dossier.

The four-page memo, drafted by staff of Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), lays out a series of allegations that it says “raise concerns with the legitimacy and legality of certain DOJ and FBI interactions with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.”

Trump declassified the memo despite fierce and rare public objections from the FBI, which had warned that the document contained “material omissions of fact that fundamentally impact the memo's accuracy.”

“The FBI takes seriously its obligations to the FISA Court and its compliance with procedures overseen by

career professionals in the Department of Justice and the FBI,” the FBI said in its statement at the time.

The memo accuses senior DOJ officials of inappropriately using the controversial Trump dossier to obtain surveillance warrants on transition team members.

“The Committee has discovered serious violations of the public trust, and the American people have a right to know when officials in crucial institutions are abusing their authority for political purposes,” Nunes said in a statement at the time.

Democrats on the Intelligence Committee, however, blasted the memo for mischaracterizing “highly sensitive classified information that few Members of Congress have seen” and which “fails to provide vital context and information contained in DOJ's FISA application and renewals.”

Information used in surveillance applications usually goes through several rounds of authentication and federal authorities must show probable cause that the target is acting as an agent of a foreign power.

The Republican memo, however, argues this is not the case and that information from dossier was “essential” to the acquisition of warrants on Carter Page.

The dossier, which makes a series of salacious allegations about Trump's ties to Russia, was put together by opposition research firm Fusion GPS and former MI6 officer Christopher Steele. It was later revealed that the Clinton campaign funded, in part, the dossier.

Tom Fitton, the president of Judicial Watch, said his first read of the documents released by the DOJ on Saturday seemed to “confirm the FBI and DoJ misled the courts in withholding info about Clinton-DNC being behind the info used to get the FISA warrant.”

“Given this corruption, President Trump should intervene and declassify the heavily redacted material,” he continued in a statement.

The GOP, in their memo, largely portrayed the Justice Department as harboring anti-Trump bias, an issue that has continued to grow as a flashpoint among House Republicans who are leading a joint investigation into FBI decision-making during the 2016 election as well as potential bias against Trump by top DOJ and FBI officials.

The documents released Saturday are likely to add kindling to the fire, with the GOP now investigating multiple allegations of bias at root in the Russia investigation.

Just last week, the House Judiciary and Oversight and Government Reform committees publicly interviewed FBI counterintelligence agent Peter Strzok about the text messages he sent to Lisa Page

disparaging Trump during the election. Page, now a former FBI lawyer, met with the committee for a closed-door interview one day after Strzok's fiery hearing that devolved quickly into partisan fighting and personal attacks.

The hearings come after a June DOJ Inspector General report heavily criticized Strzok, saying he displayed a "biased state of mind" during a critical phase of the investigation of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while secretary of State, but that no decision made during the course of the probe was a result of bias or improper influence.

The report found that Strzok, who served as the No. 2 on the federal Clinton probe as well as the beginnings of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe, did not influence the Clinton investigation. But the report found that his actions cast a cloud over the DOJ.

-Updated 9:11 p.m.

DOJ Releases Carter Page FISA Applications

By Chuck Ross |

[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

In an unprecedented move, the Department of Justice has released 412 pages of top-secret documents related to surveillance conducted against former Trump campaign chairman Carter Page.

The documents include an October 2016 application and three renewal applications for Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrants taken out against Page.

The New York Times and other news outlets obtained the applications through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.

"The FBI believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government," reads the FISA application.

"As discussed above, the FBI believes that Page has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government," reads the initial FISA application, dated Oct. 21, 2016. The Justice Department and FBI obtained three additional FISAs in January, April and June 2017.

The application also says that the FBI had probable cause to believe that Page engaged in "clandestine intelligence activities" and is an agent of a foreign power.

Republican and Democrats on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence previously released highlights from the documents. A memo released by Committee Chairman Devin Nunes has revealed that the Justice Department and FBI relied

heavily on the Democrat-funded Steele dossier in the FISA applications.

The dossier is the first piece of evidence cited in the FISA application section laying out the allegations that Page coordinated with Russian government officials on election-related "influence activities."

That section cites information from "Source #1" who alleged that during a trip to Moscow in July 2016, Page met secretly with two sanctioned Kremlin insiders, Igor Sechin and Igor Diveykin, as part of a collusion scheme involving the Trump campaign.

The source appears to be Christopher Steele, the former British spy who wrote the dossier.

Steele also alleged in the dossier that Page worked with Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort to exchange information with Russian operatives. Page has vehemently denied the dossier's allegations, and says he has never spoken to Manafort. He also says he has never met Sechin and Diveykin while denying that he is a Russian agent.

FBI officials have told Congress that investigators had not corroborated the dossier's allegations when it was cited in the FISA applications. But the FISA application shows that the FBI and Justice Department believed Steele to be a "reliable" source. Steele has been compensated for other work by the FBI, and his intelligence has been used in other criminal proceedings, the FISA application says.

"This is an unprecedented moment in FOIA transparency, as never before has a FISA warrant been processed for release," Bradley Moss, a national security attorney who filed one of the numerous lawsuits for the Page documents, told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

"Now, with the actual documents in hand, not political spin written by lawmakers with agendas, the American public can make their own decision on whether anything was inappropriate about the surveillance of Carter Page," added Moss, who is deputy executive director for the James Madison Project, a government transparency group.

Reached for comment shortly after The Times published the FISA applications, Page told TheDCNF: "I'm having trouble finding any small bit of this document that rises above completely ignorance and/or insanity."

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FBI Used Anti-Trump Media To Obtain Spy Warrants On Campaign

By Rowan Scarborough

[Washington Times](#), July 22, 2018

The FBI continued to tell judges that dossier writer Christopher Steele wasn't the source of a news article the bureau used to corroborate a wiretap application when in fact Mr. Steele had publicly acknowledged he fed the anti-Trump story.

This chronology is contained in four heavily censored Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) applications obtained by the conservative watchdog group Judicial Watch under the Freedom of Information Act.

The documents also show the FBI relied as evidence on mainstream media stories critical of the Donald Trump presidential campaign.

The warrants were submitted by the FBI for surveillance on Trump campaign volunteer Carter Page from October 2016 to September 2017. The FBI told surveillance court judges Mr. Page was an illegal foreign agent of Russia. Mr. Page has repeatedly denied this and has not been charged.

The applications are heavily redacted. The FBI's central piece of evidence in the unreacted parts is the dossier compiled by Mr. Steele, a former British spy hired by Fusion GPS with money from the Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee. In other words, the FBI was relying on partisan opposition research to target Mr. Page for a year of intrusive phone and electronic intercepts.

Mr. Steele's dossier made several charges against Mr. Page. The paramount one is that, during a public-speaking trip to Moscow in July 2016, he met with two U.S.-sanctioned Kremlin figures, Igor Sechin and Igor Divyekin. Mr. Steele said Mr. Page discussed sanctions relief for bribes.

To bolster Mr. Steele, the FBI presented to the judges as an independent source a Sept. 23, 2016 article by Michael Isikoff in Yahoo News. It reported the same supposed Sechin-Divyekin meetings.

The applications state, "[Steele] told the FBI that he/she only provided this information to the business associate [Fusion] and the FBI The FBI does not believe that [Steele] directly provided this information to the press."

But in fact, he did. Mr. Isikoff has acknowledged that his source was Mr. Steele. And the FBI by June 2017, the date of its final application, had a way to know this.

The Washington Times first reported on April 25 2017 that Mr. Steele filed a declaration in a libel suit

against him in London. He stated that he had personally briefed Yahoo News and other media in September 2016 before the story appeared.

The Times produced his declaration in the story, which was repeated by other news media. But the FBI two months later continued to tell judges that, "The FBI does not believe that [Steele] directly provided this information to the press."

The Republican majority of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has previously stated that the FBI knew at the time, but did not disclosed to the judges, that the dossier was funded by the Democratic Party.

Rep. Devin Nunes, California Republican, has accused the FBI of abusing the FISA process by relying on the opposition research of the other party.

The only reference to possible bias comes when the FBI is discussing a "U.S. Person" who matches the job description of Glenn Simpson, the Fusion co-founder who hired Mr. Steele.

"The FBI speculates that the identified U.S. person was likely looking for information that could be used to discredit candidate #1's [Trump's] campaign," the application said.

The FBI cited other mainstream media stories to augment the wiretap application. Several referred to a platform plank at the Republican National Convention dealing with defending Ukraine.

The liberal media narration was that Trump people watered-down the language to please Russia, which is backing separatists in their war against Kiev. The FBI cited this angle.

But Trump aides said the stories were inaccurate. They say that actually the final language was tougher on Russia than the first draft. A single delegate proposed adding a sentence that endorsed "lethal" aid. A compromise was struck by adding a sentence that pledged military support, a less provocative way of saying lethal aid.

In the end, the Trump administration sent state-of-the-art Javelin anti-tank missiles to the Ukraine last May.

The FBI also cited stories about then-Senate Minority Leader Harry Reed. The Democrat sent a letter to the FBI calling for a probe of the Trump campaign based on Steele dossier tidbits showing up in the media.

"The FBI's use of politically charged media reports to surveil political opposition is tyrannical," said J.D. Gordon, a former Pentagon spokesman and senior campaign advisers. "It's fundamentally un-American and those responsible must be brought to justice."

Rep. Adam Schiff of California, top Democrat on House intelligence, has been defending of Mr. Steele, reading his charges into hearing transcripts

"Looking more and more like the President cannot separate fact from fiction," Mr. Schiff tweeted on Sunday. "FBI had good reason to believe Page was an agent of a foreign power, and the FISA was lawfully approved by 4 different judges. If the President isn't compromised, why does he continue to act this way?"

Mr. Page lived in Moscow as an energy investor in the 2000s and has a string of contacts with Russian business people.

In 2013, a Russian spy posing as a United Nations diplomat made contact with Mr. Page in New York. It is standard operating procedure for Russian intelligence to try to recruit American business contacts.

Mr. Page was later informed by the FBI that the Russian was an agent. He said he cooperated in the investigation and was never charged.

He has testified under oath that he never met the Russians named by Mr. Steele.

Mr. Steele's dossier also accused Mr. Page of coordinating Russian election interference, which included hacking of Democratic Party computers, with campaign manager Paul Manafort.

Mr. Page testified he has never met nor spoken with Mr. Manafort. No evidence has surfaced to rebut his testimony.

The FBI fired Mr. Steele in late October after he went to Mother Jones magazine with his dossier stories. In future applications, the FBI continued to vouch to judges for his honesty.

His dossier cites unnamed Kremlin sources, leading Republicans to charge that if any one is guilty of election year colluding with Moscow it is the Clinton campaign.

At the time of all four FISA applicants, the FBI probe was led by Peter Strzok, the agent known for his dislike of President Trump in text messages to his lover.

In August 2016, before the first Page application, he texted that "We'll stop it" referring to the Trump campaign.

Special Counsel Robert Mueller fired Mr. Strzok in July 2017 after being briefed on the text messages by the Department of Justice inspector general.

FISA Warrant Application Supports Nunes Memo

By Byron York

[Washington Examiner](#), July 22, 2018

The weekend release of a highly-redacted version of the FBI's application for a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant to wiretap onetime Trump foreign policy adviser Carter Page has renewed the argument over the Nunes memo — the brief report

produced by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Devin Nunes detailing problems in the application. From the time of the memo's release in February, Democrats and some in the press have denounced it as a collection of lies and mischaracterizations. On Saturday night, the denouncing started again. "The only thing the newly released FISA documents show is that Republicans have been lying for months," the lefty think tank Center for American Progress said in a typical response.

Now, however, we have both the memo and the FISA application, if in a blacked-out state. We can compare the two. And doing so shows the Nunes memo was overwhelmingly accurate. Perhaps some Democrats do not believe it should have been written, or they dispute what it included and left out, or they do not agree with its conclusions, but it was in fact accurate.

The memo was comprised of a short introduction followed by 13 substantive paragraphs. Here is a look at each one.

[Read: Devin Nunes: 'Time to eliminate redactions']

The first paragraph:

On October 21, 2016, DOJ and FBI sought and received a FISA probable cause order (not under Title VII) authorizing electronic surveillance on Carter Page from the FISC. Page is a US citizen who served as a volunteer advisor to the Trump presidential campaign. Consistent with requirements under FISA, the application had to be first certified by the Director or Deputy Director of the FBI. It then required the approval of the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General (DAG), or the Senate-confirmed Assistant Attorney General for the National Security Division.

That is accurate. The second paragraph:

The FBI and DOJ obtained one initial FISA warrant targeting Carter Page and three FISA renewals from the FISC. As required by statute (50 U.S.C. 1805 (d)(1)) a FISA order on an American citizen must be renewed by the FISC every 90 days and each renewal requires a separate finding of probable cause. Then-Director James Comey signed three FISA applications in question on behalf of the FBI, and Deputy Director Andrew McCabe signed one. Sally Yates, then-Acting DAG Dana Boente, and DAG Rod Rosenstein each signed one or more FISA applications on behalf of DOJ.

That is accurate. The third paragraph:

Due to the sensitive nature of foreign intelligence activity, FISA submissions (including renewals) before the FISC are classified. As such, the public's confidence in the integrity of the FISA process depends on the court's ability to hold the government to the highest standard, particularly as it relates to surveillance of

American citizens. However, the FISC's rigor in protecting the rights of Americans, which is reinforced by 90-day renewals of surveillance orders, is necessarily dependent on the government's production to the court of all material and relevant facts. This should include information potentially favorable to the target of the FISA application that is known by the government. In the case of Carter Page, the government had at least four independent opportunities before the FISC to accurately provide an accounting of the relevant facts. However, our findings indicate that, as described below, material and relevant information was omitted.

That is accurate, but a reading of the last sentence, of course, depends on one's definition of "material and relevant." There is no doubt, however, that Nunes made a case that the information left out of the application, like the specific source of funding for the Steele dossier, was "material and relevant" to the Page case.

The fourth paragraph:

1) The "dossier" compiled by Christopher Steele (Steele dossier) on behalf of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Hillary Clinton campaign formed an essential part of the Carter Page FISA application. Steele was a longtime FBI source who was paid over \$160,000 by the DNC and Clinton campaign, via the law firm Perkins Coie and research firm Fusion GPS, to obtain derogatory information on Donald Trump's ties to Russia.

That is accurate. When the Nunes memo was released, there was controversy over its assertion that the dossier formed an "essential" part of the Page FISA application. But Senate Judiciary Committee staff, who reviewed the FISA application separately from the House, concluded that the dossier allegations made up the "bulk" of the application. Even a Washington Post article Sunday purporting to debunk the Nunes memo in light of the FISA application conceded that the dossier played "a prominent role" in the FISA application. Finally, the Nunes memo's assertion, noted below, that former FBI number-two Andrew McCabe agreed that "no surveillance warrant would have been sought from the FISC without the Steele dossier information," was not challenged by Democrats when the Nunes memo was made public.

The fifth paragraph:

a) Neither the initial application in October 2016, nor any of the renewals, disclose or reference the role of the DNC, Clinton campaign, or any party/campaign in funding Steele's efforts, even though the political origins of the Steele dossier were then known to senior DOJ and FBI officials.

That is accurate. Readers will search the FISA application in vain for any specific mention of the DNC, Clinton campaign, or any party/campaign funding of the dossier. For the most part, names were not used in the application, but Donald Trump was referred to as "Candidate #1," Hillary Clinton was referred to as "Candidate #2," and the Republican Party was referred to as "Political Party #1." Thus, the FISA application could easily have explained that the dossier research was paid for by "Candidate #2" and "Political Party #2," meaning the Democrats. And yet the FBI chose to describe the situation this way, in a footnote: "Source #1...was approached by an identified U.S. person, who indicated to Source #1 that a U.S.-based law firm had hired the identified U.S. person to conduct research regarding Candidate #1's ties to Russia...The identified U.S. person hired Source #1 to conduct this research. The identified U.S. person never advised Source #1 as to the motivation behind the research into Candidate #1's ties to Russia. The FBI speculates that the identified U.S. person was likely looking for information that could be used to discredit Candidate #1's campaign."

Democrats argue that the FISA Court judges should have been able to figure out, from that obscure description, that the DNC and Clinton campaign paid for the dossier. That seems a pretty weak argument, but in any case, the Nunes memo's statement that the FISA application did not disclose or reference the role of the DNC and the Clinton campaign is undeniably true.

The sixth paragraph:

b) The initial FISA application notes Steele was working for a named U.S. person, but does not name Fusion GPS and principal Glenn Simpson, who was paid by a U.S. law firm (Perkins Coie) representing the DNC (even though it was known by DOJ at the time that political actors were involved with the Steele dossier). The application does not mention Steele was ultimately working on behalf of – and paid by – the DNC and Clinton campaign, or that the FBI had separately authorized payment to Steele for the same information.

That is accurate. The seventh paragraph:

2) The Carter Page FISA application also cited extensively a September 23, 2016, Yahoo News article by Michael Isikoff, which focuses on Page's July 2016 trip to Moscow. This article does not corroborate the Steele dossier because it is derived from information leaked by Steele himself to Yahoo News. The Page FISA application incorrectly assesses that Steele did not directly provide information to Yahoo News. Steele has admitted in British court filings that he met with Yahoo News – and several other outlets – in September 2016 at the direction of Fusion GPS. Perkins Coie was aware of Steele's initial media contacts because they hosted at

least one meeting in Washington DC in 2016 with Steele and Fusion GPS where this matter was discussed.

Most of that is accurate. But when the Nunes memo was released, Democrats argued that the FISA application did not use the Yahoo article to corroborate the dossier, but rather – as it used other news accounts of varying reliability – to describe part of the Carter Page story. As it turned out, the application used part of the Yahoo piece in a way that suggested it was corroborating the dossier, but it also used part of it as a news account. So call the Nunes memo's corroboration claim only partly accurate.

The eighth paragraph:

a) Steele was suspended and then terminated as an FBI source for what the FBI defines as the most serious of violations – an unauthorized disclosure to the media of his relationship with the FBI in an October 30, 2016, Mother Jones article by David Corn. Steele should have been terminated for his previous undisclosed contacts with Yahoo and other outlets in September – before the Page application was submitted to the FISC in October – but Steele improperly concealed from and lied to the FBI about those contacts.

That is accurate. The ninth paragraph:

b) Steele's numerous encounters with the media violated the cardinal rule of source handling – maintaining confidentiality – and demonstrated that Steele had become a less than reliable source for the FBI.

That is accurate. In the initial FISA application, the FBI argued that Steele had not leaked to the media. In later applications, the bureau admitted Steele had leaked but maintained that he was still credible because he only leaked after providing the dossier allegations.

The tenth paragraph:

3) Before and after Steele was terminated as a source, he maintained contact with DOJ via then-Associate Deputy Attorney General Bruce Ohr, a senior DOJ official who worked closely with Deputy Attorneys General Yates and later Rosenstein. Shortly after the election, the FBI began interviewing Ohr, documenting his communications with Steele. For example, in September 2016, Steele admitted to Ohr his feelings against then-candidate Trump when Steele said he “was desperate that Donald Trump not get elected and was passionate about him not being president.” This clear evidence of Steele's bias was recorded by Ohr at the time and subsequently in official FBI files – but not reflected in any of the Page FISA applications.

That is accurate. The eleventh paragraph:

a) During this same time period, Ohr's wife was employed by Fusion GPS to assist in the cultivation of opposition research on Trump. Ohr later provided the

FBI with all of his wife's opposition research, paid for by the DNC and Clinton campaign via Fusion GPS. The Ohr's relationship with Steele and Fusion GPS was inexplicably concealed from the FISC.

That is accurate, although one could argue whether the information here was really required for the FISA application; also, the “inexplicably concealed” reference is the opinion of the House committee.

The twelfth paragraph:

4) According to the head of the counterintelligence division, Assistant Director Bill Priestap, corroboration of the Steele dossier was in its “infancy” at the time of the initial Page FISA application. After Steele was terminated, a source validation report conducted by an independent unit within FBI assessed Steele's reporting as only minimally corroborated. Yet, in early January 2017, Director Comey briefed President-elect Trump on a summary of the Steele dossier, even though it was – according to his June 2017 testimony – “salacious and unverified.” While the FISA application relied on Steele's past record of credible reporting on other unrelated matters, it ignored or concealed his anti-Trump financial and ideological motivations. Furthermore, Deputy Director McCabe testified before the Committee in December 2017 that no surveillance warrant would have been sought from the FISC without the Steele dossier information.

That is accurate. The thirteenth, and final, paragraph:

5) The Page FISA application also mentions information regarding fellow Trump campaign advisor George Papadopoulos, but there is no evidence of any cooperation or conspiracy between Page and Papadopoulos. The Papadopoulos information triggered the opening of an FBI counterintelligence investigation in late July 2016 by FBI agent Pete Strzok. Strzok was reassigned by the Special Counsel's Office to FBI Human Resources for improper text messages with his mistress, FBI Attorney Lisa Page (no known relation to Carter Page), where they both demonstrated a clear bias against Trump and in favor of Clinton, whom Strzok had also investigated. The Strzok/Lisa Page texts also reflect extensive discussions about the investigation, orchestrating leaks to the media, and include a meeting with Deputy Director McCabe to discuss an “insurance” policy against President Trump's election.

That is accurate.

Parts of the Nunes memo, like references to the Strzok-Page texts or Bruce Ohr's testimony, contain information that was not in the application. But that does not make it any less accurate. The bottom line is that, whatever the criticism it has received, the Nunes memo

was almost entirely accurate. The release of the FISA application supports that view.

How A Trump Decision Revealed A G.O.P. Memo's Shaky Foundation

By Charlie Savage

[New York Times](#), July 22, 2018

When President Trump declassified a memo by House Republicans in February that portrayed the surveillance of a former campaign adviser as scandalous, his motivation was clear: to give congressional allies and conservative commentators another avenue to paint the Justice Department's investigation into Russian election interference as tainted from the start.

But this past weekend, Mr. Trump's unprecedented decision, which he made over the objections of law enforcement and intelligence officials, had a consequence that revealed his gambit's shaky foundation. The government released the court documents in which the F.B.I. made its case for conducting the surveillance — records that plainly demonstrated that key elements of Republicans' claims about the bureau's actions were misleading or false.

On Sunday Mr. Trump nevertheless sought to declare victory. In a series of early-morning tweets, he claimed without evidence that the newly disclosed files “confirm with little doubt that the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts” to win approval to start wiretapping the former adviser, Carter Page, shortly after he had left the campaign amid criticism of his ties to Russia.

“Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC,” Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter, referring to the Democratic National Committee.

Mr. Trump's portrayal, which came as the administration is trying to repair the damage from his widely criticized meeting with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, revived the claims put forward in February by Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee. But in respect after respect, the newly disclosed documents instead corroborated rebuttals by Democrats on the panel who had seen the top-secret materials and accused Republicans of mischaracterizing them to protect the president.

The records again cast an unflattering light on Representative Devin Nunes, the committee's chairman, who led the attack on the F.B.I. surveillance, though he admitted in February that he had not read the application

documents. Mr. Nunes has taken repeated steps to try to bolster Mr. Trump and undercut the Russia investigation.

In his tweets, Mr. Trump left unmentioned the nature of the concerns the F.B.I. raised about Mr. Page in the court applications. The documents said that the bureau “believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government,” that he had “established relationships with Russian government officials, including Russian intelligence officers,” and that he had been “collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government.”

Mr. Page has not been charged with a crime in the nearly two years since the initial wiretap application was filed in October 2016, near the end of the Obama administration. On CNN's “State of the Union” on Sunday, Mr. Page dismissed the claims in the documents, saying, “I've never been an agent of a foreign power in any — by any stretch of the imagination.”

He also played down a letter he wrote in 2013 in which he described himself as “an informal adviser to the staff of the Kremlin,” saying he had merely “sat in on some meetings.”

Much of the dispute in February over the surveillance of Mr. Page centered on the fact that the F.B.I.'s court application included unverified information it had obtained from Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence agent who had been hired to research Mr. Trump's ties to Russia by a firm that was in turn being financed by the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign.

The application and several renewals, which continued into the Trump administration, contain many redacted pages, making it impossible to tell how many other sources of information the F.B.I. had. But the uncensored portion does also discuss a prior investigation into a Russian spy ring that tried to recruit Americans as assets in 2013. Mr. Page is known to have been one of its targets.

Still, information from Mr. Steele — who had provided credible intelligence to the United States government in the past — was clearly an important part of the application. The application cited claims he had gathered about purported meetings between Mr. Page and two Kremlin-linked Russians during a trip he took to Moscow in July 2016; Mr. Page has denied meeting with them, although he later contradicted his claims that he had not met any Russian government officials on that trip.

One central issue was whether the F.B.I. gave the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court sufficient information about the funding of Mr. Steele's research to understand that he had been commissioned to dig up

information about Mr. Trump's links to Russia by someone with a political motive, even though he had been a neutral source in the past.

The Republican memo issued in February said the F.B.I. had failed to "disclose or reference the role of the D.N.C., Clinton campaign or any party/campaign in funding Steele's efforts, even though the political origins of the Steele dossier were then known to senior D.O.J. and F.B.I. officials." But Democrats at the time contended that the court had been told that the research had politically motivated origins.

The application contains a page-length explanation that does alert the court that the person who commissioned Mr. Steele's research was "likely looking for information to discredit" Mr. Trump's campaign. It goes on to explain why, notwithstanding Mr. Steele's "reason for conducting the research," the F.B.I. believed it was credible.

Republicans had also faulted the application for not explicitly identifying Mrs. Clinton's campaign and the Democratic National Committee by name. But that criticism ignored the fact that law enforcement officials were following a general policy not to name Americans, even referring to Mr. Trump only as "Candidate #1" in renewal applications despite noting that he was now the president-elect and then the president.

David Kris, an expert on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act who served in the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, dismissed the notion that the intelligence court judges had been misled.

"Now we can see that the footnote disclosing Steele's possible bias takes up more than a full page in the applications, so there is literally no way the FISA Court could have missed it," he wrote on the blog Lawfare. "The F.B.I. gave the court enough information to evaluate Steele's credibility."

Another issue in dispute was Republicans' suggestion that a September 2016 Yahoo News article about Mr. Page's ties to Russia was cited in the application as corroboration for Mr. Steele's information even though it later emerged that he had been a source for that article. Democrats at the time said that was misleading because the purpose of including the article was instead to tell the court that Mr. Page had denied the allegations about his meetings in the July 2016 trip to Moscow.

The application dovetails with the Democrats' account. The article is described in a section that discusses how the allegations about Mr. Page became public, prompting him to deny them but still leave the Trump campaign as it distanced itself from him. That section of the application is titled: "Page's Denial of Cooperation With the Russian Government."

The application materials also identify the four judges who approved the wiretap and its extensions; all are appointees of Republican presidents. And while much of the material is redacted, it shows that the number of pages included in each application grew significantly, suggesting that the government was likely adding new information, such as discussing the information it obtained from the wiretap, to justify its request to prolong the surveillance.

Asked whether Mr. Nunes wanted to comment on the release of the surveillance materials and the ways they appeared to contradict his February statements, a spokesman for the Intelligence Committee said in an email that he did not.

But Representative Adam B. Schiff, the top Democrat on the committee, said the documents affirmed that law enforcement officials had acted appropriately in obtaining the wiretap order in the face of "a profound counterintelligence threat" from Russia. He said the materials put the "conspiracy theories to rest," while criticizing Mr. Trump's decision to declassify their existence during a pending investigation.

"These national security considerations were cast aside by President Trump, whose decision to declassify the Nunes memo — which misrepresented and distorted these applications — over the fervent opposition of the Department of Justice, was nakedly political and self-interested, and designed to interfere with the special counsel's investigation," he said.

And Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, rejected Mr. Trump's insinuation that the wiretapping of Mr. Page equated to surveillance of the campaign. "I don't believe that them looking into Carter Page means they were spying on the campaign," Mr. Rubio said on "State of the Union."

"The only plot is to interfere in the election by the Russians," he added.

With The Release Of New Documents, Devin Nunes's Memo On Carter Page Has Gotten Even Less Credible

By Philip Bump

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

Earlier this year, the political world was gripped by a stunning accusation from Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) that the government's application for a warrant to surveil former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page was born of bias and almost entirely reliant on a dossier of information compiled on the dime of Democratic operatives. He had a memo that made that argument; eventually, and probably without much goading, President Trump was persuaded to release it publicly.

Even based on what was known then, the hype surrounding Nunes's memo seemed to oversell the point. In short order, other revelations about the warrant application made it clear that the contents of the memo were iffy. It was the second time in two years that Nunes had gone to bat in defense of one of Trump's pet theories, and neither time worked out that well.

As it turns out though, Nunes's efforts to raise questions about the surveillance warrant, granted by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, were even less robust than they seemed at the time. With the release Friday of a redacted copy of both the initial warrant application targeting Page in October 2016 and the three 90-day extensions of the warrant, we can get a better sense of just how far from the mark the Nunes memo actually was.

The memo made a number of interpretive claims — assessments of the importance of aspects of the warrant — as well as a number of factual claims. Among the latter were:

That the dossier of reports from former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele on behalf of the firm Fusion GPS were an “essential” part of the application.

That the fact that Fusion GPS was being paid by a law firm working for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and the Democratic National Committee was never explicitly stated.

That neither Steele nor Fusion GPS are identified by name.

That the application cites a Yahoo News article from September 2016 that “does not corroborate the Steele dossier because it is derived from information leaked by Steele himself to Yahoo News.” The application also incorrectly asserts that Steele wasn't directly Yahoo's source for the story.

That the application mentions another Trump campaign adviser, George Papadopoulos but that there is no evidence of cooperation between him and Page.

The memo made a number of other claims focusing on information related to the launch of the investigation into Page that aren't illuminated any further by the released document.

We can begin with the first point above, that the Steele dossier's information was “essential” to the warrant.

At the outset, Page is described in the warrant application as “an agent of a foreign power,” specifically Russia. The third section of the application details the evidence linking Page to Russia, beginning with Page having lived in the country for several years and being mentioned as a possible target for recruitment by Russian intelligence officers about five years ago, at

which point he was interviewed by the FBI. The first four pages of this section, excluding footnotes, are either redacted or deal with that prior interaction with federal authorities.

The information from the Steele dossier comprises the next 4½ pages, excluding footnotes. It is followed by Page's public response to reports that he was under investigation, a response triggered by the Yahoo article. That response runs for about 3½ pages and makes up the fourth section of the report.

Five fully redacted pages, making up the fifth and sixth sections of the document, follow, leading into the document's conclusion.

It's clear that the information uncovered by Steele does play a prominent role. It's impossible to say how critical it was to the warrant, though, because so much of the document is redacted.

What isn't redacted, though, makes a few things clear. First, that the Yahoo article is introduced not as a corroborating story but as the first part of the section titled “Page's Denial of Cooperation with the Russian Government.” As noted above, that article spurred Page's response, which is included. There's no suggestion from the unredacted document that it was included to serve as a second source for the story.

While the warrant application does state that the FBI “does not believe that Source #1 [Steele] directly provided this information to the press” — which was incorrect — that same footnote (No. 18) clearly implies that Glenn Simpson of Fusion GPS might have been Yahoo's source, undercutting the idea the FBI was trying to use Yahoo to bolster the significance of Steele's findings.

(Steele's findings, by the way, include allegations that Page met with key Russian figures during a trip to Moscow in July 2016. Page later admitted to the House Intelligence Committee that, despite past denials, he had encountered senior Russian officials on that trip, albeit not the ones Steele identified.)

Each of the three renewals of the warrant to surveil Page was granted after the FBI argued that it needed to keep collecting data on Page. The length of the renewals relative to the original application suggests the government kept adding new information to its requests as the surveillance was ongoing.

Consider three sections that appear in each document: The third section (including the Steele information), the fourth through sixth sections (including Page's denial and more redacted information) and the conclusion. Here's the page number where each of those appears in each document.

As time passes, more information is added to the warrant applications. The middle section — whatever it

contained — kept getting larger, meaning that the section dealing with Steele's report made up less of the overall application.

It's worth noting, by the way, that after Steele leaked the existence of his dossier to Mother Jones in late October, the FBI cut off its relationship with him. That's indicated in a bold-type footnote in the renewal applications.

"[I]n or about October 2016, the FBI suspended its relationship with Source #1 [Steele] due to Source #1's unauthorized disclosure of information to the press," it reads. However: "Notwithstanding the suspension of its relationship with Source #1, the FBI assesses Source #1 to be reliable as previous reporting from Source #1 has been corroborated and used in criminal proceedings."

In the initial application, a footnote — which appears on the page in type the same size as the rest of the warrant — indicates Steele had been a corroborated FBI source in the past about whom the FBI was unaware of any "derogatory information."

There is a full page of footnotes that includes an exploration of the motivations behind Steele's research, specifically noting why Steele's "reason for conducting the research" doesn't disqualify its validity.

You've noticed that Steele isn't mentioned by name in the application and is referred to as Source #1. The critique that Steele and Fusion GPS aren't identified by name is especially hollow because none of the key actors are. Trump is "Candidate #1." Clinton, "Candidate #2." The Republican Party is "Political Party #1." Clinton, Fusion GPS, Steele and the DNC aren't identified by name because no one is, save Page, some Russians and Papadopoulos.

The context for naming Papadopoulos isn't clear; the document is largely redacted in the section where he's mentioned. But that section does include two important unredacted lines: "the FBI believe that the Russian Government's efforts are being coordinated with Page and perhaps other individuals associated with Candidate #1's campaign," and "Page has established relationships with Russian Government officials, including Russian intelligence officers."

For all that we learned in the release of the memo, there's still an enormous amount of redacted information that prevents us from getting anywhere close to a full picture of what happened. From the evidence at hand though, it's certainly fair to assume that it's Nunes's memo, not the warrant application, that suffered from a stronger political bias in its creation.

We can't entirely blame Nunes, though. In an interview with Fox News in February, he admitted that he himself hadn't read the warrant application.

FBI Told FISA Court Steele Wasn't Source Of Report Used To Justify Surveilling Trump Team, Docs Show

By Gregg Re

[Fox News](#), July 22, 2018

One-time advisor of U.S. president-elect Donald Trump Carter Page addresses the audience during a presentation in Moscow, Russia, December 12, 2016. REUTERS/Sergei Karpukhin – RC165B503FF0

On four occasions, the FBI told the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance (FISA) court that it "did not believe" former British spy Christopher Steele was the direct source for a Yahoo News article implicating former Trump aide Carter Page in Russian collusion, newly released documents reveal.

Instead, the FBI suggested to the court, the September 2016 article by Michael Isikoff was independent corroboration of the salacious, unverified allegations against Trump in the infamous Steele Dossier. Federal authorities used both the Steele Dossier and Yahoo News article to convince the FISA court to authorize a surveillance warrant for Page.

But London court records show that contrary to the FBI's assessments, Steele briefed Yahoo News and other reporters in the fall of 2016 at the direction of Fusion GPS – the opposition research firm behind the dossier.

The revelations are contained in heavily-redacted documents released over the weekend after a Freedom of Information lawsuit by the organization Judicial Watch.

The materials released by the DOJ include an October 2016 application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to wiretap Page as well as several renewal applications.

The FBI's assessment that Steele was not the direct source of the Yahoo News article is contained in all of the released FISA applications, including a renewal in June 2017.

"The FBI does not believe that Source #1 [Steele] directly provided this information to the identified news organization that published the September 23rd News Article," the FBI states in one of the released FISA documents. "Source #1 told the FBI that he/she only provided this information to the business associate and the FBI."

The documents describe Source #1 as someone "hired by a business associate to conduct research" into Trump's Russia ties – but do not mention that Fusion GPS was funded by the DNC and Hillary Clinton campaign.

Instead, the documents say only: "The FBI speculates that the identified U.S. person was likely

looking for information that could be used to discredit [Trump's] campaign.”

Fox News believes that the U.S. person is Glenn Simpson, co-founder of Fusion GPS.

The FBI describes Steele in the documents as “credible” and “reliable,” but noted that it suspended its relationship with him in October 2016 because of his “unauthorized disclosures to the press.”

The unredacted FISA materials also contain only limited references to ex-Trump adviser George Papadopoulos. Media reports had speculated that Papadopoulos’ 2016 meeting in London with a professor who had ties to Russia was a key justification for the FISA-authorized surveillance of Page.

Papadopoulos has since pleaded guilty to lying to federal investigators in Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s probe.

Reacting to the document release, Page told Fox News, “I’m having trouble finding any small bit of this document that rises above complete ignorance and/or insanity.”

Critics have charged that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who signed off on the FISA application renewals, should not have approved them without more reliable intelligence.

In a series of tweets early Sunday, President Trump called the FISA documents proof of a “witch-hunt” and a “scam,” and praised Judicial Watch for obtaining the documents.

But Democrats countered that the release had, in fact, vindicated the FBI.

“These documents affirm that our nation faced a profound counterintelligence threat prior to the 2016 election, and the Department of Justice and FBI took appropriate steps to investigate whether any U.S. persons were acting as an agent of a foreign power,” Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif, who serves as ranking member of the House intelligence committee, said in a statement.

“FBI and DOJ would have been negligent had they not used all the tools at their disposal, including Court-authorized [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] FISA surveillance, to protect the country,” he added.

Fox News’ Catherine Herridge and Pamela K. Browne contributed to this report.

Gregg Re is an editor for Fox News. Follow him on Twitter @gregg_re.

Graham: Carter Page Wiretap ‘not At All’ Justified

By Eli Okun

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

Sen. Lindsey Graham on Sunday called government surveillance of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page “not at all” justified, backing up President Donald Trump in his criticism of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court-approved wiretaps.

Appearing on CBS’ “Face the Nation,” the South Carolina Republican said, “The whole FISA warrant process needs to be looked at.” He called the Christopher Steele dossier that the FBI cited in its FISA warrant applications “a bunch of garbage” and criticized the government for not being clear that the dossier’s research had been partially funded by Democrats.

Page, who worked for Trump’s presidential campaign on foreign policy, was under government suspicion for his ties to Russia. Documents released Saturday showed that the FBI had been worried that Russia wanted to recruit him.

Trump has slammed the wiretap approval process, alongside his criticism of the ongoing special counsel investigation into Russian electoral meddling and possible Trump campaign collusion.

In multiple direct appeals Sunday to the president, a famous consumer of TV news, Graham urged him to get proactive on preventing Russian attempts at interfering in upcoming U.S. elections — and to impose tougher sanctions on Moscow.

“You didn’t collude with the Russians, or at least I haven’t seen any evidence, but Mr. President, they meddled in the elections,” Graham said to the camera. “They stole [John] Podesta’s emails. They hacked into the DNC. It could be us next. It could be some other power, not just Russia. Harden our electoral infrastructure for 2018. Mr. President, Dan Coats is right. The red lights are blinking.”

“He’s been tougher than [Barack] Obama, but he hasn’t been tough enough,” Graham added.

The hawkish senator also issued a warning that China was pulling North Korea back from its stated moves toward denuclearization.

He said the U.S. should restart military exercises with South Korea and set a deadline for Pyongyang to return the remains of American service members killed in the Korean War.

“Mr. President, North Korea’s playing the same old game with you they’ve played with every other president. ... You need to make sure that China and North Korea know and [believe] that you’re different than everybody else,” Graham said.

Lindsey Graham: Dossier ‘Has Proven To Be A Bunch Of Garbage’ [VIDEO]

By Chuck Ross

[Daily Caller](#), July 22, 2018

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a top member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Sunday that the Steele dossier “has proven to be a bunch of garbage” and that the FBI has verified “almost none of it.”

Graham was commenting on the dossier, which was funded by the Clinton campaign and DNC, in the wake of the Department of Justice’s release of FBI applications for Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrants against former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

The four applications — an initial application and three renewals — show that the FBI relied heavily on the dossier to obtain the warrants. The dossier, which was written by former British spy Christopher Steele, claimed that Page met secretly with two sanctioned Kremlin insiders during a trip to Moscow in July 2016. Steele also accused Page of being the Trump campaign’s contact to the Russian government.

Page has vehemently denied the allegations. On Sunday, President Donald Trump claimed on Twitter that the applications showed that the FBI “misled” the federal courts and that the government “illegally” spied on his campaign.

Graham said Sunday that he agrees with Trump’s assessment.

“I think the whole FISA warrant process needs to be looked at,” Graham said in an interview on CBS News’ “Face the Nation.”

“The warrant on Carter Page was supported mostly by a dossier that came from Michael [sic] Steele who was being paid by the Democratic party to do opposition research and the dossier was collected, I think, from Russian intelligence services and if you asked the FBI today, how much of the dossier on Trump has been verified, almost none of it.”

Asked whether he believes that the surveillance against Page was justified, Graham responded: “No, not at all in my view.”

“If the dossier is the reason you issued the warrant, it was a bunch of garbage. The dossier has proven to be a bunch of garbage,” he told host Margaret Brennan.

Republicans have questioned why the FBI relied on the dossier to obtain the spy warrants if Steele’s reporting had not been verified. The FISA applications show that the FBI deemed Steele to be “reliable” because information he had provided the bureau in the past was deemed to be “credible.”

Graham and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley have referred Steele to the Justice Department for possible criminal action for what

they claim are inconsistent statements about his interactions with the media before the 2016 election.

Steele acknowledge in a London court case that in September and October 2016, he briefed reporters with several American news outlets regarding his Trump investigation. Two of those outlets, Yahoo! News and Mother Jones, published information provided by Steele.

The FBI terminated its relationship with Steele after he spoke with Mother Jones reporter David Corn. The FBI said in its three renewal applications that Steele violated an agreement that he not speak to the press about his investigation.

Administration Releases Application To Wiretap Trump Campaign Adviser

By Shane Harris

[Washington Post](#), July 21, 2018

The Justice Department on Saturday released a previously classified application to wiretap former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page, who was under suspicion by the FBI of being a Russian agent.

The government had monitored Page under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and the heavily redacted documents were made public after media organizations sued for their release under the Freedom of Information Act.

The release of the application, along with three subsequent applications to renew the surveillance, was extraordinary and historic. In the four decades that FISA has been in effect, it’s not clear that any application for surveillance has ever been released. Materials related to FISA operations and legal processes are among the most highly classified and closely guarded in the government. The New York Times, USA Today and the James Madison Project all sued for release of the materials.

The publication is also sure to fuel the political fight between Republicans and Democrats over the propriety of the surveillance and how it was legally justified.

In early-morning tweets Sunday from his golf course in Bedminster, N.J., President Trump sought to cast the documents as vindicating his campaign.

He congratulated the president of Judicial Watch — a conservative watchdog group that was among those that filed Freedom of Information Act lawsuits to obtain the records — before going on to mock his own Justice Department.

“As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!” Trump said.

In a follow-up tweet, he added: "Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!"

Republican lawmakers have accused the Obama administration, which sought the surveillance order in October 2016, of relying on a controversial dossier of then-candidate Trump's alleged connections to Russia to support the surveillance order. The document, compiled by a former British intelligence officer, was used as political opposition research by Democrats. But the author, Christopher Steele, also shared his findings with the FBI because he was concerned that Trump may have been compromised by Russia.

Members of the House Intelligence Committee have sparred for months over the Page surveillance. Republicans, who previously released some details about the application, had accused the FBI of relying too much on the Steele dossier, which they painted as politically motivated and uncorroborated. A spokesman for Rep. Devin Nunes, the California Republican who leads the committee, did not respond to a request for comment.

Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, described the release of the documents a "potentially groundbreaking development" and called for further details to be made public.

"The Carter Page FISA docs should be declassified and further unredacted (protecting only sources and methods) so Americans can know the truth," Meadows said Saturday on Twitter. "If the previous admin was funneling campaign research toward surveillance, we need to know."

But Democrats countered that the FISA application relied on more information than what Steele provided. And they said Steele had been a reliable source of information to the FBI in the past.

"Even in redacted form, the initial FISA application and three renewals underscore the legitimate concern [the] FBI had about Page's activities as it was investigating Russia's interference," Rep. Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said Saturday. But he added, "While I'm pleased that these conspiracy theories are finally being put to rest, the release of these materials during a pending investigation should not have happened," referring to the ongoing probe of Russian interference in the U.S. elections.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said in a statement Saturday, "Despite President Trump's

repeated claims, these documents provide clear evidence of 'Russia's coordination with Carter Page,' a high-ranking Trump campaign official, 'to undermine and improperly and illegally influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election.'"

The application shows that the FBI portrayed Steele to the court as a trusted source. The FBI also disclosed that his work was on behalf of a client who was possibly looking for politically damaging information about Trump. Republicans had accused the bureau of failing to notify the court of the dossier's political origins.

Much of the more than 400 pages of applications is redacted, making it impossible to know all the evidence that the FBI presented to a judge in seeking the wiretap order.

In particular, whole sections in the application detailing the FBI's justification for believing Page was a Russian agent are blacked out. Some of the unredacted material refers to news articles. But FISA applications typically rely on classified and other sensitive information, according to officials with knowledge of the process.

The application identifies Page by name and says that he engaged in "clandestine intelligence activities" on behalf of Russia and had been the target of Russian government recruitment. The application describes Russia as having interfered in the 2016 presidential election.

Page has denied that he was a Russian agent.

Meadows Calls Ex-Trump Aide Surveillance Docs 'Potentially Groundbreaking Development'

By Jacqueline Thomsen

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) on Saturday called documents released by the Department of Justice "groundbreaking."

He also called for the declassification of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) applications for surveillance warrants on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

The documents, released by the Department of Justice earlier Saturday, were heavily redacted but indicated that the FBI "believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government ... to undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law."

"If the previous admin was funneling campaign research toward surveillance, we need to know," Meadows tweeted.

Potentially groundbreaking development here. The Carter Page FISA docs should be declassified and further unredacted (protecting only sources and methods) so Americans can know the truth.

If the previous admin was funneling campaign research toward surveillance, we need to know. <https://t.co/vWfeatCdUk>— Mark Meadows (@RepMarkMeadows) July 22, 2018

The lawmaker was responding to Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton's claim that the documents appear to "confirm the FBI and DoJ misled the courts in withholding info about Clinton-DNC being behind the info used to get the FISA warrant."

"Given this corruption, President Trump should intervene and declassify the heavily redacted material," Fitton said in a statement. Judicial Watch was one of the organizations that had requested to obtain the documents under the Freedom of Information Act.

The FISA warrant applications for Page's surveillance have been at the heart of GOP claims of bias against President Trump at the Justice Department.

"I'm having trouble finding any small bit of this document that rises above complete ignorance and/or insanity," Page told The Hill after the documents' release.

Democrats pushed back against those claims: House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) argued in a statement Saturday that the documents "provide clear evidence of 'Russia's coordination with Carter Page,' a high-ranking Trump campaign official, 'to undermine and improperly and illegally influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election.'"

"For more than a year, House Republicans have bullied the Department of Justice and FBI to release highly sensitive documents to derail the Special Counsel's and other legitimate national security investigations and cover for the President," Pelosi said. "For the sake of our national security and our democracy, these vital investigations must be allowed to continue unhindered by Republican interference."

Trump Claims It Looks Like His Campaign 'was Illegally Being Spied On'

By Mark Moore

[New York Post](#), July 22, 2018

President Trump on Sunday said recently released documents about how the FBI monitored former campaign aide Carter Page shows that his 2016 presidential campaign was "illegally being spied" on.

"Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC," Trump wrote on his Twitter

account. "Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!"

The president was referring to the Department of Justice's release late Saturday of a trove of heavily redacted materials about the FBI's application for a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant to monitor Page in 2016.

The FBI said it "believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government ... to undermine and influence the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election in violation of U.S. criminal law."

The more than 400 pages of documents include the original FISA warrant sought in October 2016 and three renewals.

In another Tweet, Trump thanked Judicial Watch, the conservative group that sued for release of the documents, and said they confirm the FBI "misled the courts."

"As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of

"Justice" and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!," wrote Trump, who's spending the weekend at his golf resort in New Jersey.

Page has denied any connection with the Russians.

Special counsel Robert Mueller is investigating Russian involvement in the 2016 election and whether any Trump campaign associates colluded with Moscow.

Trump Says His Campaign Was Spied Upon Illegally, Offers No Evidence

By Reuters Staff

[Reuters](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Carter Page: FBI Warrant Claims 'So Ridiculous'

Says he never acted as foreign agent

By Tom Howell Jr.

[Washington Times](#), July 22, 2018

Carter Page, a former Trump campaign adviser, said the warrant FBI agents used to snoop on him is "so ridiculous" and "misleading" and that he never acted as a Russian agent.

"I've never been an agent of a foreign power by any stretch of the imagination," Mr. Page told CNN's State of the Union.

Mr. Page, speaking on CNN's State of the Union, was responding to the release of previously top-secret documents used by the FBI to obtain a wiretap and snoop on Mr. Page in 2016.

The FBI believe Mr. Page was the subject of a "targeted recruitment" by the Russian government, according to the papers released late Saturday.

Mr. Page said he sat in on meetings but never spoke to Russians cited in the documents, Igor Sechin and Igor Diveykin.

"Never in my life," Mr. Page said.

Mr. Trump says the disclosed warrants shows the FBI used dodgy sources to spy on his campaign through Mr. Page, though Democrats and some Republicans say the FBI had good reason to track Mr. Page, who acknowledged being an informal adviser to the Kremlin and had traveled to Russia.

Mr. Page said he participated in a few meetings in the run-up to G20 meetings in 2013 but that he served an informal role and was not the foreign agent described in the papers.

"This is so ridiculous it's just beyond words. You're talking about misleading the courts ...Where do you even begin? It's literally just a complete joke," Mr. Page said.

Carter Page Says FISA Warrant Accusations 'So Ridiculous' And 'Misleading'

By Sophie Tatum
[CNN](#), July 22, 2018

Washington (CNN)Carter Page on Sunday called the accusations against him detailed in the foreign surveillance warrant application released by the FBI "so ridiculous."

"You talk about misleading the courts, it's just so misleading," Page said about the warrant application in an interview on CNN's "State of the Union with Jake Tapper."

"It's literally a complete joke," he told Tapper.

On Saturday, the FBI released a redacted version of the warrant application on Page, a Trump campaign foreign policy adviser, after news organizations and advocacy groups sued for its disclosure.

Tapper asked Page about being a past adviser to Russia, to which Page said the term adviser was "way over the top."

"I sat in on some meetings," Page said.

However, when Tapper pressed him about his previous reference to himself as an informal adviser to the Kremlin, Page downplayed his earlier remarks, responding, "informal, having some conversations with people, I mean, this is really nothing and just an attempt to distract from the real crimes shown in this misleading document."

The release of the document is noteworthy as it marks the first public disclosure of a highly sensitive FISA request. Information included in the request had been largely reported through two declassified memos released separately by Republicans and Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee, but Saturday's disclosure put the FBI's own argument in black and white for the first time.

The warrant application states as justification for seeking to surveil Page that the FBI "believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government."

"The FBI believes that Page has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government," the application states, adding that "there is probable cause that such activities involve or are about to involve violations of the criminal statutes of the United States."

President Donald Trump on Sunday also accused the Justice Department and the FBI of misleading the courts, following the release of a previously classified foreign surveillance warrant application.

Trump wrote in a Sunday morning tweet that the FISA documents "confirm with little doubt," that the Justice Department and FBI "misled the courts," despite the fact that the document itself acted as legal justification for the FBI to obtain the 2016 warrant.

"Congratulations to @JudicialWatch and @TomFitton on being successful in getting the Carter Page FISA documents," Trump wrote. "As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of 'Justice' and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!"

Congratulations to @JudicialWatch and @TomFitton on being successful in getting the Carter Page FISA documents. As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of "Justice" and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

Trump went on to allege in a second tweet that his campaign was potentially being "illegally" surveilled for "the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC."

"Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon

(surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!” Trump’s follow up tweet on Sunday morning said.

Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

Partisan feud

The warrant has been a major point of contention between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans have charged that it’s evidence of a pattern of abuse by the Justice Department and the FBI targeting the Trump campaign. They also say the warrant is tainted — based on the opposition research dossier on Trump and Russia that was paid for by Democrats — and that because the FISA warrant helped launch the FBI investigation into Trump and Russia, the whole investigation is tainted.

Democrats, however, say the FISA warrant on Page was justified because of his contacts with Russia, and they argue that the FBI and Justice Department followed proper procedure in seeking and getting the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to approve the warrant.

Democrats also argue the FBI’s interest in Page predated its knowledge of the opposition research dossier and say it was not the dossier and the Page FISA warrant that prompted the FBI’s counterintelligence investigation into Russia, but rather an earlier conversation that former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos had with an Australian diplomat about alleged Russian dirt on Clinton.

The last occasion that Republicans had the opportunity to revise the law outlining surveillance powers, the Republican-held Senate passed a law that upheld a key surveillance tool.

In January, the Senate reauthorized Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act by a vote of 60-38. Those provisions allow the US government to collect communications, such as emails and phone records, of foreigners on foreign soil without a warrant. While the law targets non-US citizens, critics warn the government could incidentally monitor US citizens who are communicating with non-US citizens outside the United States.

On Sunday, Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida defended the warrant in an interview on “State of the Union.”

“I don’t think they did anything wrong,” he said. “I think they went to the court, they got the judges to approve it, they laid out all the information, and there was a lot of reasons unrelated to the dossier for why they wanted to look at Carter Page, and Carter Page was not a key member of the Trump campaign.”

The document released Saturday, which is more than 400 pages and includes the initial October 2016 FISA warrant on Page as well as three subsequent renewals, says that the FBI “believes Page has been the subject of targeted recruitment by the Russian government.”

Page on Sunday denied claims that he worked for the Kremlin, and called accusations that he had advised Moscow “spin.”

“No, I’ve never been an agent of a foreign power by any stretch of the imagination,” he said. “I may have, back in the G20 when they were getting ready to do that in St. Petersburg, I might have participated in a few meetings that a lot of people – including people from the Obama administration – were sitting on, and Geneva, Paris, et cetera, but I’ve never been anywhere near what’s being described here.”

Trump also continued to tweet Sunday about the document’s release, quoting Fox News’ Pete Hegseth and Andrew McCarthy.

“Andrew McCarthy – ‘I said this could never happen. This is so bad that they should be looking at the judges who signed off on this stuff, not just the people who gave it. It is so bad it screams out at you.’ On the whole FISA scam which led to the rigged Mueller Witch Hunt!” Trump wrote.

Trump continued in another tweet: “.@PeteHegseth on @FoxNews ‘Source #1 was the (Fake) Dossier. Yes, the Dirty Dossier, paid for by Democrats as a hit piece against Trump, and looking for information that could discredit Candidate #1 Trump. Carter Page was just the foot to surveil the Trump campaign...’ ILLEGAL!”

CNN’s Jeremy Herb, Evan Perez and David Shortell contributed to this report.

Carter Page Says Claims That Russians Tried To Recruit Him Are ‘ridiculous’

By Nikki Schwab

[New York Post](#), July 22, 2018

Former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page called it “totally unreasonable” that the Russians were trying to recruit him in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election.

"This is so ridiculous, it's just beyond words," Page told CNN's Jake Tapper when asked if he was an agent of a foreign power. "It's literally a complete joke."

Page's appearance on "State of the Union" came a day after the Justice Department released a heavily redacted version of the Foreign Intelligence Security Act application the FBI used to spy on him.

"The FBI believes that Page has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian government," the application said.

Page, a foreign policy adviser for the campaign, acknowledged that he may have participated in some meetings with Russians, but not at the level he's accused of.

"Jake, it's really spin, I sat in on some meetings, but to call me an adviser is way over the top," Page said.

Tapper brought up a letter Page wrote where he described himself as an informal adviser to the Kremlin in advance of the 2013 G-20 meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

"This is really nothing," Page said.

The CNN host also asked Page if he had established relations with government officials, another claim found in the FISA warrant.

"Well let's see what they are referring to specifically," Page answered.

Page denied conversing with two of the Russians listed in the documents, Igor Sechin and Igor

Diveykin, and said Diveykin never told him that the Russians had dirt on Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

"Totally false. That's directly from the dodgy dossier," Page said, referring to the document assembled by ex-British spy Christopher Steele, which contains a number of unverified claims about then-candidate Trump's relationship with the Russians.

On Sunday, President Trump congratulated the group Judicial Watch and its president Tom Fitton in a tweet for getting the FBI to release the FISA document trove before knocking the FBI and the Department of Justice.

Judicial Watch and a number of news organizations had sued the U.S. government in order to get the documents released.

"As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of 'Justice' and FBI misled the courts," Trump wrote. "Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!"

Responding To FISA Release, Carter Page Calls Spying Allegations 'ridiculous'

By Elise Viebeck And David Fahrenthold

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

Former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page on Sunday denied he was an intelligence agent for Russia, after the release of usually secret documents showed federal investigators believed he was engaged in "clandestine intelligence activities" on behalf of Russia.

Page's denial, on CNN's "State of the Nation," was his first public response to the release on Saturday of secret applications for federal wiretaps on him.

The documents — still heavily redacted — showed that federal investigators were looking into Page's possible connections with Russia as early as 2013, long before Trump named him as an adviser to his presidential campaign in March 2016.

On Sunday, Page said that it was "ridiculous" and a "complete joke" to believe he had been an agent of the Russian government.

"I've never been an agent of a foreign power by any stretch of the imagination," Page said on CNN. That echoed President Trump's own statements on the documents — issued via Twitter from Trump's golf club in New Jersey — that the wiretap on Page was part of politically motivated spying on Trump's presidential campaign.

Page himself ducked questions about what, exactly, his connections to Russia had been.

When CNN's Jake Tapper noted that Page had once called himself an "informal advisor" to the Kremlin, Page responded: "You know, informal, having some conversations with people. I mean, this is really nothing."

"I've never been anywhere near what's being described here" in the released documents, Page said. "There was nothing in terms of nefarious behavior."

Also Sunday, Republican senators Marco Rubio (Fla.) and Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.) urged Trump to take a harder line against Russian President Vladimir Putin, a few days after Trump seemed deferential to Putin after a summit meeting in Helsinki.

On CBS, Graham — a sometime Trump ally — seemed to be speaking directly to Trump, telling him to impose "new sanctions, heavy-handed sanctions" on Russia before Putin visits Washington.

Graham noted that Trump had changed his position about whether Russians interfered in the 2016 presidential election: "He's changed his mind four times this week."

"The president gets this confused. If you suggest that Russians meddled in 2016, he goes to the idea that, 'Well, I didn't collude with them,' " Graham said.

Speaking directly to Trump again, he urged the president not to treat questions about Russian interference only as an attack on his own legitimacy. “Mr. President, they meddled in the election,” Graham said. “It could be us next. It could be some other power,” meaning that Republicans might be hurt, instead of helped.

The heavily redacted documents were released after a week of head-scratching developments related to Trump’s posture toward Russia.

Rubio (R-Fla.), the author of a bill that would impose severe sanctions on Russia if it were determined to have interfered in a U.S. election, said Trump should approach meetings with Putin without illusions about the Russian leader’s endgame.

“He’s interested in gaining advantage at our expense and to his benefit,” Rubio said on CNN.

The new documents about the wiretap on Page seemed to be at the top of the president’s mind. In Twitter messages, Trump repeated an attack used by some of his allies in the House: that, in seeking the wiretaps, the FBI had relied too much upon a “dossier” compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele — and paid for by Trump’s Democratic opponents.

Steele also shared his findings with the FBI because he was concerned that Trump may have been compromised by Russia.

“As usual they are ridiculously heavily redacted but confirm with little doubt that the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts. Witch Hunt Rigged, a Scam!” Trump said.

In a follow-up tweet, Trump added: “Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. Ask her how that worked out – she did better with Crazy Bernie. Republicans must get tough now. An illegal Scam!”

In his appearance on CBS, Graham was asked if the surveillance of Page was justified. “No, not at all, in my view. If the dossier’s the reason you issued the warrant, it was a bunch of garbage,” Graham said.

One of Trump’s top defenders in the House — Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) — also attacked the FBI’s application to wiretap Page an interview on Fox News’s “Sunday Morning Futures.”

Goodlatte blasted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act application as having been based on “a very flawed document, the so-called Steele dossier, that has never been verified.”

Goodlatte said he has viewed the documents without most of the redactions and that it is “critically important” for the public to be able to do the same. “We do want to see how this investigation was launched and

how it contrasts with the shocking way in which they handled the Hillary Clinton email investigation,” he told host Maria Bartiromo.

The released documents don’t show the full set of evidence and sources the FBI relied upon in seeking a judge’s permission to wiretap Page. Whole sections in the application — detailing the FBI’s justification for believing Page was a Russian agent — are blacked out.

But the documents make clear that Steele was one source for the FBI. In using Steele’s material, the FBI also disclosed to judges that his work was on behalf of a client who was possibly looking for politically damaging information about Trump.

Before the release, Republicans had accused the bureau of failing to notify the court of the dossier’s political origins.

The application identifies Page by name and says that he engaged in “clandestine intelligence activities” on behalf of Russia and had been the target of Russian government recruitment. The application describes Russia as having interfered in the 2016 presidential election.

On Sunday, Rubio, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, disagreed with Trump’s conclusion that the Page wiretap was intended as a means of conducting surveillance on the Republican’s presidential campaign.

“I don’t think it’s part of any broader plot,” Rubio said.

Page “went around the world bragging about his connections to Russia” even before the campaign, which meant he was already “on their screen” at the FBI, Rubio said. “. . . I don’t believe that them looking into Carter Page means they were spying on the campaign.”

Six days after Trump’s meeting with Putin, both Graham and Rep. Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said they still do not know what Trump and Putin said when they met privately in Helsinki last week.

“We have no idea what this president, our president, agreed to,” Schiff said on ABC News’s “This Week.”

“Ostensibly there may have been agreements on Ukraine, on Syria, and who knows what else? . . . It is negligent with our national security for us not to know.”

Schiff said Trump is “acting like someone who is compromised by Russia.”

“It may very well be that he is compromised, or it may very well be that he believes that he’s compromised, that the Russians have information on him,” he said.

Felicia Sonmez and Matt Zapotosky contributed to this report.

Carter Page Acknowledges Working As Informal Adviser To Russia

By Eli Okun

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

Former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page on Sunday called allegations that he was a Russian agent “spin,” a “ridiculous smear campaign” and “literally a complete joke” — but admitted that he had worked as an informal adviser to the Russian government.

Page appeared on CNN’s “State of the Union” following the release Saturday of new documents tied to his wiretapping, including the government’s application to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court and subsequent renewals. He found himself sparring with an increasingly exasperated Jake Tapper, the host.

The FBI wrote in the documents that it believed Russia was trying to recruit Page, a foreign policy aide on Donald Trump’s presidential campaign who now sits at the eye of the storm in ongoing investigations into Russian electoral interference and possible Trump campaign collusion. Page called himself an “informal adviser” to Russia in a 2013 letter.

“I’ve never been an agent of [a] foreign power by any stretch of the imagination,” Page said Sunday.

Page acknowledged under questioning from Tapper that “there may have been a loose conversation” with Russian officials about U.S. sanctions, and that “a few people might have brought it up in passing.” But he added that “there was nothing in terms of any nefarious behavior” and that he’d never heard from Russians about compromising information on Hillary Clinton.

Page specifically denied having ever communicated with Igor Sechin or Igor Diveykin, Russians who were listed in the documents. “Never in my life,” Page replied when Tapper followed up with a question about him having met with Sechin, the president of a Russian energy company.

Instead, Page trained his ire on the U.S. government officials who had sought to surveil him — despite the fact that multiple FISC judges, all Republican appointees, had signed off on the wiretapping.

His comments dovetailed with angry tweets Sunday morning from Trump, who inveighed against “the whole FISA scam which led to the rigged Mueller Witch Hunt” and insinuated that “the Department of ‘Justice’ and FBI misled the courts.”

Trump: Obama Didn’t Warn About Russia Before Election Because ‘It Is All A Big Hoax’

By Emily Birnbaum

[The Hill](#), July 22, 2018

President Trump on Sunday blamed his predecessor for the response to Russian election interference in 2016, which he appeared to call “a big hoax.”

“So President Obama knew about Russia before the Election,” Trump tweeted. “Why didn’t he do something about it? Why didn’t he tell our campaign?”

“Because it is all a big hoax, that’s why, and he thought Crooked Hillary was going to win!!!”

So President Obama knew about Russia before the Election. Why didn’t he do something about it? Why didn’t he tell our campaign? Because it is all a big hoax, that’s why, and he thought Crooked Hillary was going to win!!!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

The statement follows Trump’s insistence this week that he believes Russian operatives sought to interfere in the recent election.

Trump faced widespread pushback last week following a joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which Trump appeared to cast doubt on the Kremlin’s interference in the 2016 election. Trump said Putin was “extremely strong and powerful in his denial” of Russian meddling, and added he didn’t see a reason why it “would” be Russia.

After days of intense criticism, Trump walked back the statement, claiming he meant to say he didn’t see a reason why it “wouldn’t” be Russia. Though he said he trusted the intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia did interfere, he repeated a claim that other parties could have been involved in the meddling.

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen last week said publicly that Russia definitively interfered in the election. Nielsen said some level of Russian interference is still present, and Coats said there is “no doubt” Russia sees the 2018 midterm as a potential target.

The Trump-Putin press conference and ensuing blowback came days after special counsel Robert Mueller indicted 12 Russian intelligence officials for conspiring to interfere in the 2016 election by hacking U.S. election systems.

Trump has deflected criticism about his performance in Helsinki by criticizing former President Obama, continually claiming his administration did nothing when they received reports that Russia was conspiring to sow discord on U.S. soil.

“The stories you heard about the 12 Russians yesterday took place during the Obama Administration, not the Trump Administration,” he tweeted last week. “Why didn’t they do something about it, especially when

it was reported that President Obama was informed by the FBI in September, before the Election?"

The Obama administration in 2016 accused Russia of deploying hackers during the presidential race and issued sanctions against the country for its actions. After the election, under Obama's orders, the major U.S. intelligence agencies issued a report stating that Russia was responsible for breaching U.S. systems.

Obama has also claimed he told Putin to end Moscow's meddling in the U.S. electoral system.

The Other Russian Meddling

Democrats howl about Putin's offenses, but not in Latin America.

By Mary Anastasia O'Grady

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

'It's Really Spin': Carter Page Denies Being A Russian Agent As Lawmakers Urge Trump To Act Tougher Toward Kremlin

By Elise Viebeck

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

Former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page on Sunday denied he was an intelligence agent for Russia, while lawmakers appeared on the morning political shows to urge President Trump to act tougher toward the Kremlin.

Page's denial was his first public response to the release on Saturday of a wiretap application that said he engaged in "clandestine intelligence activities" on behalf of Russia. He said allegations he worked on the country's behalf as an agent or an informal adviser were "ridiculous" and a "complete joke."

"I've never been an agent of a foreign power by any stretch of the imagination," Page said on CNN's "State of the Union."

The heavily redacted documents were released after a week of head-scratching developments following the president's meeting on Monday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.

The president at a joint news conference with the Russian leader said he had no reason to believe that Russia would have interfered in the 2016 election, contradicting the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community; he later said he misspoke. The White House also announced that it was extending an invitation for Putin to come to Washington this fall, even as intelligence officials and lawmakers said they still did not fully understand what happened at the Helsinki meeting.

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), a sometime Trump ally, pleaded with the president on CBS News to impose "new sanctions, heavy-handed sanctions" on Russia before Putin visits Washington.

"Come up with a set of sanctions that would be a hammer over Russia's head if they continue to interfere in the 2018 election," Graham said on CBS's Face the Nation.

"Just have sanctions that can fall on Russia like a hammer. Do you meet with this guy from a position of weakness ... If you were really tough with Putin, he would not be doing what he is doing," Graham said.

Graham and another lawmaker, House Intelligence Committee Ranking Member Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.), said they still do not know what Trump and Putin said when they met privately in Helsinki last week.

"We have no idea what this president, our president, agreed to," Schiff said on ABC's This Week.

"Ostensibly there may have been agreements on Ukraine, on Syria, and who knows what else? ... It is negligent with our national security for us not to know."

Schiff said Trump is "acting like someone who is compromised by Russia."

"It may very well be that he is compromised or it may very well be that he believes that he's compromised, that the Russians have information on him," he said.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), the author of a bill that would impose severe sanctions on Russia if it was determined to have interfered in a U.S. election, said Trump should approach meetings with Putin without illusions about the Russian leader's endgame.

"He's interested in gaining advantage at our expense and to his benefit," Rubio said on CNN.

The bill from Rubio and Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) requires the director of national intelligence to declare whether a foreign government interfered in a federal election within a month of it taking place. If the foreign government is determined to be Russia, the bill mandates that the United States impose sanctions within 10 days.

The measure gained new co-sponsors last week after Trump seemed to question the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community that the Kremlin meddled in the 2016 presidential race.

At the news conference with Putin in Helsinki, Trump said he had no reason to believe that Russia "would" interfere in the election. He later said he meant that he had no reason to believe that Russia "wouldn't" have interfered in the election.

"I don't think it was one of the best moments in the administration," Rubio said, adding that he appreciated Trump's later attempt to walk back his remark.

Rubio, a member of the Intelligence Committee, disagreed with Trump's conclusion that the Page wiretap was intended as a means of conducting surveillance on the Republican's presidential campaign.

"I don't think it's part of any broader plot," he said.

Page "went around the world bragging about his connections to Russia" even before the campaign, which meant he was already "on their screen" at the FBI, Rubio said. "... I don't believe that them looking into Carter Page means they were spying on the campaign."

Page accused law enforcement officials of fabricating information to strengthen their bid to monitor his communications.

He said claims that he spoke with Russian nationals about incriminating information about Hillary Clinton were "totally false" and denied he ever discussed lifting Western sanctions with Igor Sachin, a high-ranking Russian official.

"It's really spin," Page said. "I sat in on some meetings. To call me an adviser is way over the top. ... This is really nothing."

The wiretap application documents identified Page by name and said he had been the target of Russian government recruitment. They were made public after media organizations sued for their release.

"I might have participated in a few meetings that a lot of people, including people from the Obama administration, were sitting in on," Page said.

"I've never been anywhere near what's being described here. ... There was nothing in terms of nefarious behavior," he said.

Trump on Sunday argued the documents support his view that the Justice Department was conducting illegal surveillance on his campaign.

"Looking more & more like the Trump Campaign for President was illegally being spied upon (surveillance) for the political gain of Crooked Hillary Clinton and the DNC. ... An illegal Scam!" Trump tweeted.

Trey Gowdy: Russian Meddling Clear, And Trump Needs To 'Act Like It'

By Tom Howell Jr.

[Washington Times](#), July 22, 2018

House Oversight Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy said the evidence of Russian meddling in the 2016 election is clear and that President Trump "needs to say that and act like it."

"The president has access to every bit of evidence," Mr. Gowdy, South Republican, told Fox News Sunday. "The evidence is overwhelming."

Mr. Gowdy, South Carolina Republican, was reacting to Mr. Trump's widely panned summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.

He said Mr. Trump missed an opportunity to bolster the U.S. intelligence community's case against Russian actors by seeming to trust Mr. Putin, who said he didn't meddle. Mr. Trump walked back the statement the next day.

"Every syllable matters and you really shouldn't be having to correct it when you're the leader of the free world," Mr. Gowdy said.

At the same time, the top House investigator said he hasn't seen any evidence that Mr. Trump actively colluded with Russians to gain an advantage during the 2016 campaign.

And he reissued his criticism of the FBI for how it handled its application to snoop on Carter Page, a Trump campaign foreign policy adviser who was the subject of a "targeted recruitment" by the Russian government, according to the late Saturday release of previously top-secret documents used by the FBI to obtain a wiretap the former aide.

Mr. Gowdy said it's OK to look into people who might have questionable ties to Russia, but agents should have been clear about their reliance on information in a "dossier" funded in part by Hillary Clinton's campaign.

"I do have an issue when you rely on political opposition research that is unvetted," Mr. Gowdy said.

He was referring to the FBI's October 2016 application to obtain a wiretap from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. The documents were released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by Judicial Watch and several media outlets.

Mr. Gowdy said Mr. Page's role shouldn't be inflated, however, saying he is "more like Inspector Gadget than he is like Jason Bourne or James Bond."

Gowdy: Trump Advisers Should Consider Quitting Over Russia

The South Carolina Republican chastised Trump for inviting Putin to Washington this fall.

By Eli Okun

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

House Oversight Chairman Trey Gowdy chastised Donald Trump for inviting Russian President Vladimir Putin to Washington, saying Sunday that some members of the president's administration should consider quitting if Trump won't listen to their advice.

"The fact that we have to talk to you about Syria or other matters is very different from issuing an invitation," Gowdy said on "Fox News Sunday" of the Putin

invitation, which the White House confirmed last week would be extended for the fall. "Those should be reserved for, I think, our allies."

The South Carolina Republican suggested that some members of the administration may need to consider leaving if Trump continues to disregard their advice to stand firm against Russia.

That concern has dominated discourse in Washington since Trump's summit with Putin in Helsinki last week, at which he spoke more harshly of the FBI than of Russia.

"It can be proven beyond any evidentiary burden that Russia is not our friend and they tried to attack us in 2016," Gowdy told host Bret Baier. "So the president either needs to rely on the people that he has chosen to advise him, or those advisers need to reevaluate whether or not they can serve in this administration. But the disconnect cannot continue."

Political commentators and Democratic lawmakers said after Trump's news conference with Putin — in which he refused to side with the U.S. intelligence community on the issue of Russia's interference in the 2016 election and said he held both countries responsible for tensions — that advisers including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and national security adviser John Bolton should quit their posts.

But Republican lawmakers have been more hesitant to call for such a response from the president's team.

Earlier this weekend, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman penned an op-ed for a Utah newspaper in which he said he would not resign, saying he felt he is very much needed in the role. And Coats said during a Thursday interview with NBC News' Andrea Mitchell that the question of resigning was "a place I don't really go to publicly."

"As long as I'm able to have the ability to seek the truth and speak the truth, I'm on board," Coats said. After Trump indicated Monday that he did not believe Russia was responsible for hacking Democratic Party computers and other wrongdoing during the 2016 election, Coats defended American spies' assessment that Moscow was to blame.

Gowdy struck a tone of admonishment Sunday on Trump's refusal to side with the U.S. intelligence community — comments that the president later partially walked back.

"I'm glad he corrected it," Gowdy said, "but when you're the leader of the free world, every syllable matters."

Still, Gowdy urged Trump to separate concerns about Russian interference from his frustration with the investigations into possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow.

"I have not seen one scintilla of evidence that this president colluded, conspired, confederated with Russia," he said. "And neither has anyone else, or you may rest assured Adam Schiff would have leaked it," he said, referring to the Democratic congressman from California.

Congressional Democrats continued Sunday to be skeptical of the response of their Republican colleagues on the Russia issue.

"When it comes to defending the country, they're not willing to follow through," Schiff said on ABC's "This Week."

Others were just rather startled at the week's whole turn of events.

"The fact that we have to question the integrity, the honesty and the loyalty of a commander in chief when it comes to dealing with Russia is a problem in and of itself," said Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) on CNN's "State of the Union."

As Trump Struggles With Helsinki's Fallout, Congress Faces A New Charge: Complicity

By Nicholas Fandos And Sheryl Gay Stolberg
[New York Times](#), July 22, 2018

In the nearly two years since Russia attacked the American democratic process, congressional Republicans have played conflicting roles in the drama: Some have pressed to impose sanctions on Russia and quietly pursue investigations, but they have been outshouted by Republicans who have obfuscated and undercut efforts to uncover the Kremlin's plot.

Now, as they grapple with the political and foreign policy fallout from President Trump's summit meeting in Helsinki, Finland, with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, all Republicans, regardless of their stance so far, are facing a charge even from within their own party that goes beyond the White House: complicity.

The Republicans' split-screen response was underscored with this weekend's release of highly classified documents underlying the F.B.I.'s requests to eavesdrop on a former Trump campaign adviser, Carter Page, who the bureau believed was a Russian agent.

Mr. Trump on Sunday doubled down on his accusation that the F.B.I. had "illegally spied upon" his campaign. While Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, pushed back against the president, Mr. Trump's allies in the House Republican conference backed him

up, saying the documents contained revelations damaging to the F.B.I. and seeking to minimize Mr. Page's role.

"Potentially groundbreaking development here," Representative Mark Meadows of North Carolina, the chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, wrote on Twitter. "The Carter Page FISA docs should be declassified and further unredacted (protecting only sources and methods) so Americans can know the truth."

The back and forth over Mr. Page came after nearly a week of intense focus on Mr. Trump's performance in Helsinki, where the president stood by Mr. Putin and contradicted his own intelligence agencies, only to reverse himself the next day. That prompted an impassioned speech about Republican complicity from Senator Jeff Flake, Republican of Arizona.

"We have indulged myths and fabrications, pretended it wasn't so bad, and our indulgence got us the capitulation in Helsinki," Mr. Flake said. "We in the Senate who have been elected to represent our constituents cannot be enablers of falsehoods."

The Helsinki meeting forced the collision of two conflicting impulses that have guided Republicans on Capitol Hill through the Russia episode — and even before Mr. Trump was elected. The party's deeply held skepticism of Mr. Putin and commitment to national security have clashed with a desire in some quarters to support the president at almost any cost, even as he cozies up to Mr. Putin.

That battle will be put to the test again this week, when senators have their first chance to grill Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about the meeting and lawmakers begin to formally weigh enacting additional sanctions on Russia. In an interview Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation," Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, called for "new sanctions over Putin's head."

All this is playing out against the backdrop of midterm elections, where lawmakers will face Republican voters who are still wildly enthusiastic about Mr. Trump and have, in many cases, adopted his skepticism about the Russian interference. Attacks by Mr. Trump and his allies on Capitol Hill and Fox News against those investigating him have not only fired up the president's base but, polls show, substantially eroded trust in the impartiality of the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, and the F.B.I. itself.

Some Republicans have concluded that keeping their heads down without uttering much more than general statements about Russian hostility is the only safe course.

"There's nothing you can do to stop a president, let alone this president, from saying what he thinks or what

he wants to say," said Representative Ryan Costello, Republican of Pennsylvania, who broke with party leaders to endorse proposed legislation protecting Mr. Mueller's job. "I think a lot of Republicans feel it's not worth engaging because all you do is upset a lot of Republican voters."

Democrats view Russia's election interference as nothing short of an existential threat to American democracy, and have repeatedly pushed Republican leaders to take a tougher line toward Mr. Trump and stop the attacks on investigators.

"The road to the Helsinki disaster was paved by Republican inaction every time Trump overstepped," said Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader. "Their silence, their acquiescence to things they know are wrong have given Trump the extra jolt he needed."

Even before Mr. Trump was elected, Democrats and Republicans grappled with how to respond as Russians were hacking and leaking Democratic emails, flooding social media with pro-Trump and anti-Hillary Clinton messages, and even organizing pro-Trump rallies. In September 2016, President Barack Obama summoned congressional leaders to the Oval Office to ask them to issue a strongly-worded bipartisan letter to state and local officials raising alarms about the Russian threat.

Democrats say Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, dragged his feet and watered down the letter's language. Harry Reid, the former Democratic leader, said Mr. McConnell "set a tone of weakness and complicity," while Denis R. McDonough, Mr. Obama's former chief of staff, accused Mr. McConnell of "a stunning lack of urgency."

Aides to Mr. McConnell strongly disputed that account and said Democrats were shifting blame for the Obama administration's failure to prevent the interference. "They made a lot of mistakes; they should not compound them now by trying to shift their failures onto others," said Don Stewart, Mr. McConnell's deputy chief of staff.

After the election, as the full scope of the Russian campaign was coming into focus, Republican leaders empowered their intelligence committees to begin full-scale investigations into their new president and his campaign, over Mr. Trump's objections.

Six months later, Republicans again angered the White House by passing, nearly unanimously, legislation imposing tough new sanctions on Russia as punishment for their interference. Wary of Mr. Trump's friendly posture toward Russia, the lawmakers limited his authority to lift them and dared him to issue a veto. Republicans say they also appropriated hundreds of

millions of dollars in new grants to states for election security and issued detailed reports on hardening election security.

And a smaller group of senators have chided Mr. Trump for second-guessing his intelligence agencies and attacking law enforcement agencies.

"I've said it over and over again, I've said it to the president," said Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "If we have problems, let's fix them, but when you start trying to cause Americans purposefully to distrust the Department of Justice or the F.B.I., you're doing tremendous damage to our nation."

But in the House, Trump loyalists have taken the opposite tack. They have wielded the considerable oversight powers of Congress to initiate a damaging investigation of the Russia investigators, publicly sowing doubts about the conclusions of America's intelligence agencies and the work of the F.B.I. and the Justice Department. Often drowning out the more temperate voices in their party, they have provided a forceful lift to Mr. Trump's frontal assault on the special counsel investigation and potentially emboldened him on the world stage.

Just as the House Intelligence Committee began the chamber's Russia investigation, the committee's chairman, Representative Devin Nunes of California, moved immediately to undercut the inquiry with a bizarre late-night dash to the White House. There, he received classified intelligence that, he suggested, at least partly justified Mr. Trump's unsupported claim that Mr. Obama had wiretapped Trump Tower.

The unusual episode quickly became the subject of an ethics investigation in the House, and Mr. Nunes temporarily removed himself from his committee's Russia inquiry. Rather than take a back seat, he began collecting documents and evidence that Republican allies of Mr. Trump have used against the Mueller investigation.

Speaker Paul D. Ryan has not participated in those attacks and has defended Mr. Mueller. But he has also given Mr. Nunes and his allies wide latitude, and has defended him. "He's focusing on keeping our country safe, focused on national security," Mr. Ryan told reporters in February, rejecting demands from Democrats that Mr. Nunes be stripped of his chairmanship.

Along the way, Mr. Trump and his allies have benefited from the missteps by the F.B.I. and the Justice Department. After the department released damning anti-Trump texts from two top F.B.I. officials, congressional Republicans put them center stage — especially in the conservative news media — by

accusing them of cooking up a politically-motivated investigation of the president.

"The public trust in this whole thing is gone," Representative Jim Jordan, Republican of Ohio, said in December, demanding that the Mueller investigation be called off.

The attacks have not let up. There were charges that the F.B.I. and Justice Department abused their power to spy on Mr. Page; charges by Mr. Trump and some Republicans that the F.B.I. had planted spies inside the Trump campaign itself ("Spygate," the president called it); repeated threats to impeach Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general overseeing the inquiry, who recently announced the indictment of 12 Russian military intelligence officers.

And when the House Intelligence Committee closed its Russia investigation, declaring no evidence of collusion, it raised doubts about the intelligence agencies' conclusion that Mr. Putin had wanted Mr. Trump to win, before backtracking. (In Helsinki last week, Mr. Putin confirmed that he had indeed wanted Mr. Trump to win. "Yes, I did. Yes, I did," he told reporters.)

"What's been allowed to happen on the House Intelligence Committee is shameful, disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful," said Mark Salter, a longtime adviser to Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona.

Mr. McConnell and Mr. Ryan have repeatedly said Mr. Mueller should be allowed to finish his job.

But even now, the threats continue. On the same day that Mr. Rosenstein announced the last round of special counsel indictments, Mr. Meadows, the North Carolina Republican, was spotted on the House floor carrying the deputy attorney general's impeachment papers.

Mr. Meadows and others say they are not out to protect Mr. Trump but to conduct legitimate oversight. Congress has a right to know, they say, particularly if investigators have made mistakes. They insist they take no issue with examining Russia's cybercampaign, but view the investigation into whether the Trump campaign cooperated with Russia as a partisan attack on Mr. Trump.

"I think he sees it as a push to delegitimize his presidency, and I would not necessarily disagree," Mr. Meadows said.

The Helsinki meeting, where Mr. Trump stood shoulder to shoulder with Mr. Putin and signaled he accepted the Russian president's denials, might have been a turning point for the party. But in the days that have followed, it seems only to have reinforced the competing positions.

"No prior president has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant," Mr. McCain said in the wake of the summit meeting.

But a day later, at a regular forum hosted by the Freedom Caucus, lawmakers close to Mr. Trump declared the meeting a success, pinning blame not on his performance but on the reporters who had the audacity to ask the two leaders about the attacks.

"They ask about election collusion or election meddling," Representative Andy Harris of Maryland said. "That's the problem."

Officials' Stark Warnings On Russia Diverge From White House View

Clashing assessments raise a question ahead of the next Trump-Putin summit: Can the U.S. formulate a coherent Russia policy?

By Michael R. Gordon

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Hillicon Valley: Trump's Russia Moves Demoralize His Team | Congress Drops Effort To Block ZTE Deal | Rosenstein Warns Of Foreign Influence Threat | AT&T's Latest 5G Plans

By Ali Breland, Harper Neidig, Olivia Beavers And Morgan Chalfant

[The Hill](#), July 20, 2018

Welcome to Hillicon Valley, The Hill's newsletter detailing all you need to know about the tech and cyber news from Capitol Hill to Silicon Valley.

Welcome! Follow the cyber team, Olivia Beavers (@olivia_beavers) and Morgan Chalfant (@mchalfant16), and the tech team, Harper Neidig (@hneidig) and Ali Breland (@alibreland).

TRUMP DEMORALIZES HIS TEAM WITH RUSSIA MOVES: President Trump's bungled effort to warm up to Russian President Vladimir Putin has driven a wedge between him and his own administration as it seeks to crack down on Moscow's hostile activities.

Rank-and-file intelligence and national security officials feel demoralized by the president's failure to publicly call out Putin for interfering in the 2016 election, according to sources inside and outside the federal government.

"It's just another day in paradise," said one former White House official, who requested anonymity to speak candidly. "Russia narratives have been a daily ordeal for two years. Nobody knows what the president will do or say and nobody knows what they don't know."

One U.S. official who formerly worked as an intelligence analyst said the general attitude within government is that "it does damage to our reputation globally" when Trump refuses to acknowledge the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in the 2016 contest. But the official said there is "strong faith that our intel folks will continue to do their job, regardless of the undermining."

The dizzying and often contradictory array of statements from the president and White House have also posed a dilemma for handpicked aides and advisors who are hawkish on Russia: remain on board or resign.

Top national security officials, including FBI Director Christopher Wray and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, have publicly backed the U.S. intelligence community's assessment on Russia's involvement in the election since Trump cast doubt on it in Helsinki.

What is happening behind the scenes: There have been no resignations in response to Trump's Russia meeting and people close to the administration predicted officials would rather air their concerns privately with the president than quit in protest. Two high-ranking members of the Trump administration, Vice President Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, reportedly urged the president to clean up the explosive comments he made at his press conference with Putin.

Read more of our coverage [here](#).

SENATORS PUSH FOR VOTE ON RUSSIA SANCTIONS BILL: Two senators are stepping up their efforts to advance Russia sanctions legislation, asking key Senate committees to hold a hearing and then vote on a bill by early next month.

"The Senate has the opportunity to highlight to the American public the real threats that foreign interference in our future elections pose, and to act to deter future foreign interference and defend our country," Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) wrote in a July 19 letter to top members of the Senate Foreign Relations and Banking committees.

The request for committee hearings and a subsequent vote comes after Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said he had asked the Senate Banking and Foreign Relations committees to hold hearings on Russia sanctions legislation that overwhelmingly cleared Congress last year, and to make recommendations for additional legislation if needed.

But Rubio and Van Hollen are asking the two panels to go a step further. Rubio and Van Hollen want both committees to hold a hearing before the Senate leaves town for a week-long break that starts Aug. 6. They also want the Banking Committee to vote on their legislation during the same time period.

Read more on this story by our colleague Jordain Carney.

CONGRESS DROPS EFFORT TO BLOCK ZTE DEAL: Lawmakers have reached an agreement to strip a provision from the must-pass defense policy bill that would have sunk President Trump's deal to save Chinese telecommunications giant ZTE, according to a congressional source.

Senators on Friday blasted the decision by members of a congressional conference committee to not include the upper chamber's tougher language in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which has not been released.

"By stripping the Senate's tough ZTE sanctions provision from the defense bill, President Trump – and the Congressional Republicans who acted at his behest – have once again made President Xi and the Chinese Government the big winners and the American worker and our national security the big losers," Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) said in a statement.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) added in a separate tweet that lawmakers "had to cave" on ZTE in order to get tougher language on vetting foreign investments.

The provision Rubio is referring to seeks to reform the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), the interagency panel that assesses national security threats posed by significant investments in U.S. businesses by non-U.S. investors. The reforms are an effort to guard against China accessing sensitive technology.

"So chances that a #China controlled telecomm will not just stay in business, but do so here inside the U.S. sadly just went up," Rubio said.

Read more here.

OBAMA, BUSH VETERANS DISMISS INTERPRETER SUBPOENA: Former officials from the Obama and George W. Bush administrations are pouring cold water on the idea that President Trump's interpreter from the summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin should appear before Congress.

While multiple former Obama officials say they understand the desire to talk to one of the only people in the room with Trump and Putin, several argued it would set a dangerous precedent.

"For the same reasons why we need to protect our own diplomats, there is a real concern about having translators be subject to subpoenas," said David Mortlock, director of international economic affairs at the White House National Security Council (NSC) under Obama.

He acknowledged that there is "legitimate concern about what the president may have promised Vladimir Putin." But he said subpoenaing an interpreter is a

bridge too far, and would prevent presidents from speaking freely. "They're at the center of diplomatic relationships and it raises concerns about whether you can truly have diplomatic communications," he said.

Read more of our coverage here.

BETTER GET YOUR NUMBERS RIGHT: The head of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) cyber and critical infrastructure protection efforts said Friday that states must be "much more precise" in their election security funding requests to Congress.

"If a state needs money, they need to say what they need it for and what they need – and that is going to help inform and drive the conversation on the Hill," Christopher Krebs, the undersecretary of the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD), said at The Washington Post's Cyber 202 Live event. "Rather than just say, 'We need money, give us money,' it's, 'We need X amount of money to address X threat and find out X amount of risk.'"

His remarks come a day after House Republicans voted down a Democratic-led effort to include additional election security funding in a government-spending bill. Democrats accused their GOP colleagues of failing to take the necessary steps to secure election systems from future Russian meddling. The election security funding fight comes amid rising fears that Russian may seek to carry out another influence campaign in the U.S.

Read more here.

NO UKRAINE REFERENDUM: The White House said Friday that President Trump is "not considering supporting" Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposal to hold a referendum in eastern Ukraine. "The Administration is not considering supporting a referendum in the eastern Ukraine," National Security Council spokesman Garret Marquis said in a statement.

Read more here.

ROSENSTEIN WARNS OF GROWING THREAT FROM FOREIGN INFLUENCE CAMPAIGNS: Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on Thursday warned of the growing threat from Russian influence operations, as he unveiled a new report from the Justice Department about plans to notify the public about those kinds of foreign attacks.

"These actions are persistent, they're pervasive, they are meant to undermine democracy on a daily basis – regardless of whether it is election time or not," he said during remarks at the Aspen Security Forum.

Rosenstein, who is overseeing special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, described Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election as "just one tree in a growing forest" of foreign influence operations.

He added that the Trump administration is doing "more now than ever" to combat cyber threats to U.S. citizens and elections.

Rosenstein used his remarks to introduce a new Department of Justice (DOJ) report that outlines various types of influence efforts affecting elections. It also lays out a framework for the Justice Department to follow when considering whether to publicly disclose foreign influence operations.

Read more here.

Careful, someone might be listening: The New York Times reports Michael Cohen secretly recorded Trump on making payments to an ex-Playboy model.

AT&T'S 5G STRIDES: AT&T on Friday said it will roll out 5G in three new cities by the end of 2018: Oklahoma City, Charlotte, Va., and Raleigh, N.C.

The announcement comes as telecommunications companies are putting more effort behind rolling out 5G wireless broadband. T-Mobile and Sprint in April announced plans to merge to better invest in a combined 5G network.

AT&T previously said Atlanta, Dallas and Waco, Texas would also have 5G by the end of the year. There will also be six more cities to be named.

Read more here.

APPLE WATCH, FITBIT TARIFF TROUBLES: Popular consumer electronics could become more expensive as a result of the latest U.S. tariffs imposed on Chinese goods.

According to government rulings on tariffs reviewed by Reuters, Apple watches, Fitbit fitness trackers and Sonos speakers are among the electronics assembled in China that could be affected.

While laptops and smartphones have largely dodged the impact of the tariffs, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials said a little-known subheading in the U.S. tariff code includes data transmission machines like fitness trackers and Bluetooth speakers, the news agency reported.

Read more here.

A LIGHTER TWITTER CLICK: A new argument for a name change?

AN OP-ED TO CHEW ON: Going forward, both parties should commit to a 'Cyber Election Pledge.'

ON TAP NEXT WEEK:

The House Oversight Committee is holding a hearing on "cyber-securing" U.S. elections on Tuesday at 10 a.m.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, where he's expected to face a grilling over the Helsinki summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and President Trump. His testimony will come a

week after Trump sparked intense, bipartisan backlash when he cast doubt on his intelligence community's assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, all while standing next to Putin at a joint press conference.

The Senate Intelligence committee will hold an open confirmation hearing on two top intelligence positions on Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. The panel will consider the nominations of Vice Adm. Joseph Maguire to serve as director of the National Counterterrorism Center and Ellen McCarthy to serve as the assistant secretary of State for intelligence and research.

Adam Schiff, Top Intel Democrat, Says Trump 'Acts Like He's Compromised'

By John Fritze

[USA Today](#), July 22, 2018

WASHINGTON – The top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee blasted President Donald Trump for his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, saying the president "acts like he's compromised."

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., was responding to Trump's apparent acceptance during a news conference last week of Putin's denial that Russia attempted influence the 2016 election.

Trump later attempted to clarify those remark amid a groundswell of bipartisan criticism on Capitol Hill.

"For whatever reason, this president acts like he's compromised," Schiff told ABC's This Week. "There is simply no other way to explain why he would side with this Kremlin, former KGB officer, rather than his own intelligence agencies."

Former Trump homeland security adviser Tom Bossert described the assertion as a "cheap shot" and dismissed the significance of the arrest of a 29-year-old Russian citizen named Maria Butina who prosecutors say was working to infiltrate American political organizations.

"It's an easy cheap shot to say the president's been compromised by the Russians," Bossert told ABC. "I think the Russians elected a former KGB agent and he spends all of his time and their resources squandering it on penny ante spy tactics."

Americans Give Trump Negative Marks For Helsinki Performance, Poll Finds

By Scott Clement And Dan Balz

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

By wide margins, Americans give President Trump negative marks for his conduct during a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin last week and for his

casting doubt on U.S. intelligence conclusions that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election, a new Washington Post-ABC News poll finds.

But public reaction nationally appears more muted than in Washington where Trump faced withering bipartisan criticism for appearing to side with Putin over U.S. intelligence agencies at a Monday news conference in Helsinki. Most Americans do not feel Trump went “too far” in supporting Putin, and while more Americans say U.S. leadership has gotten weaker than stronger under Trump, his ratings on this question are slightly improved from last fall.

The findings indicate that while Trump was judged critically for his summit performance, the event has not at this time proved to be a significant turning point in his presidency, despite the sharp criticism he received in the hours and days after the meeting and the multiple efforts by White House officials and the president to clarify his remarks in Helsinki. The poll results suggest that overall attitudes toward the president have hardened on both sides and that major events like Helsinki produce only modest changes in his overall standing, if any.

The Post-ABC poll conducted Wednesday through Friday finds that overall, 33 percent of Americans approve of Trump's handling of his meeting with Putin while 50 percent disapprove. A sizable 18 percent say they have no opinion. A slightly larger 56 percent disapprove of Trump expressing doubts about U.S. intelligence agencies' conclusion that Russia tried to influence the outcome of the 2016 election. On both questions, those who say they “strongly disapprove” of Trump's performance outnumber those who say they “strongly approve” by better than 2 to 1.

Trump's ratings for handling the summit represent a weakened moment for him, but they are not markedly worse than ratings of his presidency overall in other recent polls. A Washington Post-Schar School poll earlier this month, for instance, found 43 percent approved of Trump's job performance while 55 percent disapproved, with strong disapproval outpacing strong approval by roughly 2 to 1.

The new Post-ABC poll finds 40 percent saying Trump went “too far” in supporting Putin, a criticism that was voiced by both Democrats and Republicans in Washington over the past week.

However, almost as many — 35 percent — say Trump handled Putin “about right,” while another 15 percent say he did not go far enough to support Putin. The rest have no opinion. Democrats, liberals and college graduates are the only groups in the poll among whom a majority say Trump went too far in supporting Putin.

Partisans split in their ratings of Trump's meeting with Putin, but Republicans are less united in support for Trump than in other recent polls about his presidency. Among Democrats, 83 percent disapprove of Trump's handling of the meeting, while among Republicans, 66 percent approve of Trump's performance. By way of comparison, in the Post-Schar School survey, 87 percent of Republicans said they approved of Trump's overall job performance as president.

A bare majority of Republicans in the new poll — 51 percent — approve of Trump expressing doubts about U.S. intelligence conclusions on Russian election interference. But a smaller 31 percent disapprove, with 18 percent offering no opinion. Among Democrats, 78 percent disapprove of what Trump said about U.S. intelligence findings, as do 59 percent of independents.

Independents lean negative on Trump's handling of the summit overall, with 33 percent approving and 46 percent disapproving. Self-identified “moderates” are particularly negative, with 64 percent disapproving of how Trump handled the meeting, nearly as high as 73 percent among liberals. A smaller 58 percent majority of conservatives approve of Trump's conduct at the summit.

The Post-ABC poll finds that 47 percent say that under Trump, America's leadership in the world has gotten weaker, versus 30 percent who say it has gotten stronger. That is an improvement on last November, when the margin between those who said weaker versus those who said stronger was 27 percentage points.

Despite Republicans' lukewarm support for Trump's Helsinki performance, they express growing confidence in his ability to project U.S. strength around the world. A 74 percent majority of Republicans say American leadership has “gotten stronger” under Trump, up from 53 percent last November and 61 percent last July. By contrast, 80 percent of Democrats currently say Trump has weakened U.S. leadership around the world.

On this question, independents lean more negatively than positively, with 22 percent saying America's leadership has gotten stronger under Trump, 47 percent weaker and about one-quarter saying it has stayed the same.

College graduates had a much sharper negative reaction to Putin's summit than those without college degrees — college grads are 18 points more likely to disapprove of Trump's summit performance (62 percent vs. 44 percent). Those without college degrees are nearly three times as likely to say they have no opinion of Trump's performance.

In contrast to many surveys about the president and politics, the Helsinki poll produced only modest gender differences. Men were slightly less disapproving

of the president's handling of the summit than women, but the gap was not statistically significant.

Young Americans — those under age 40 — gave Trump lower marks for his overall handling of the summit than did those over 40. But younger and older Americans tended to offer similar assessments to other questions.

The Post-ABC poll was conducted by landlines and cellphones from July 18 to 20 among a random national sample of 464 adults. Overall results have a margin of sampling error of 5.5 percentage points, which is larger among subgroups.

After Obama Struggled To Warn About Russia Threat, Rod Rosenstein Announces More Aggressive Approach

By Alexandra Hutzler

[Newsweek](#), July 20, 2018

American organizations, businesses and individuals will be notified if they are a target of political meddling by foreign agents, the Justice Department announced on Thursday.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, defining the policy at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado, said that “exposing schemes to the public is an important way to neutralize them.” Rosenstein said the American public had “a right to know if foreign governments are targeting them with propaganda.”

The move comes after a week of contentious debate about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Rosenstein announced on July 13 that 12 Russian military intelligence officers were being indicted for hacking into the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.

Then, three days later, President Donald Trump met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who denied Russia's involvement in the election. Trump seemingly sided with the Russian leader over his own intelligence agencies, telling the media in a press conference that he didn't see “any reason why it would be” Russia, and that Putin was “extremely strong and powerful in his denial.”

Rosenstein said that Russian election meddling was just one example of foreign countries interfering with American affairs. The new policy will apply to any nation attempting to “undermine democracy” by spreading propaganda or disinformation.

The transparency policy is a part of the Cyber Digital Task Force established by Attorney General Jeff Sessions earlier this year, which has highlighted the many ways foreign nations can try to influence political matters in the United States. A 156-page report recently published by the task force identified ways in which

foreign countries could interfere with U.S. politics, including hacking into voting systems, influencing political organizations and disseminating misleading information on social media.

In his speech on Thursday, Rosenstein said the department would be strictly nonpartisan in its dealings with this issue, and that “our government does not take any official position on what people should believe or how they should vote, but it can and should protect them from fraud and deception perpetrated by foreign agents.”

Informing the public of foreign interference is something former President Barack Obama and his administration struggled with and received criticism over, as more information has been made available on the extent of Russia's meddling in the 2016 election.

In a series of tweets, President Trump questioned what the Obama administration was doing to quell foreign interference and accused the Obama White House of keeping quiet because they thought Hillary Clinton would win the election.

Congressman Adam Schiff told The Washington Post that if this transparency policy had been in place in 2016, “it would have served as a meaningful deterrent after Russia's interference was first discovered, and it would have informed voters more quickly and more forcefully, that a foreign government was trying to affect their vote.”

Russian Foreign Ministry Launches ‘Free Maria Butina’ Campaign After Alleged Russian Agent Is Jailed

By Siobhán O'Grady

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

Maria Butina's lawyer says the Russian student came to the United States to study at American University. U.S. prosecutors claim the 29-year-old has been operating as a covert Russian agent.

Lead federal prosecutor Erik Michael Kenerson said he doesn't think Butina was in Washington “just to attend American University” but instead was participating in a “covert influence campaign.”

On Wednesday, Butina was jailed pending her trial, and in response the Russian Foreign Ministry asked supporters to participate in an online “flash mob” and show their support for Butina by changing their social media avatars to a photo of her.

The ministry changed its own Twitter photo to feature Butina, and then tweeted in English, “#NewProfilePic, #FreeMariaButina.”

And on Saturday, the Foreign Ministry released a statement saying that in a phone call on Saturday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told U.S.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Butina should be released. Lavrov told his counterpart that she is being held “on the basis of fabricated charges.”

As The Washington Post reported this week, a grand jury indicted the political science student Tuesday after prosecutors alleged that Butina tried “to advance the interests of the Russian Federation” by infiltrating certain American political organizations. Butina has pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy and failing to declare herself as an agent of a foreign government.

Since arriving in the United States, Butina has advocated for gun rights and attended National Rifle Association conventions. At one NRA meeting, she spoke with President Trump’s son, Donald Trump Jr. She has also managed to gain access to a number of political players, attending high-profile events such as the National Prayer Breakfast.

On Friday, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov told reporters in Moscow that the accusations against Butina are “totally illegal” and that Russia “will demand her release so that she can calmly go home.”

“They’re trying to break this girl,” he said. “But she will not be broken.”

Russia Seeks Release Of Woman Accused Of Being Covert Agent

By Andrew E. Kramer

[New York Times](#), July 21, 2018

Russia’s foreign minister told Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday that charges against a woman accused of infiltrating American political organizations as a covert Russian agent were “fabricated” and she should be released.

The appeal by the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, was made in a phone call, according to the Russian Foreign Ministry. The Department of Justice has charged the woman, Maria Butina, with acting as an unregistered agent of Russia while attending conventions of the National Rifle Association and gaining access to conservative circles in an effort to influence powerful Republicans.

Moscow has mounted a vigorous effort on behalf of Ms. Butina. On Thursday, the Foreign Ministry began a social media campaign on its Twitter account, declaring that it was mobilizing a digital “flash mob” to demand her release.

The State Department had no immediate comment on Saturday’s exchange, though it’s unlikely that the United States would suddenly release Ms. Butina. In a detailed indictment, the Justice Department has accused

her of engaging in a series of deceptions over a number of years.

The phone conversation on Saturday also touched on what the Russian Foreign Ministry described as efforts to improve conditions in Syria.

The call came after a week in which Moscow seemed to move forward with what officials here said were “agreements” reached at Monday’s summit meeting between President Vladimir V. Putin and President Trump.

With Mr. Trump slow to offer an account of his closed-door discussion with Mr. Putin, details have instead flowed from Moscow on issues involving the security of Israel and the wars in Syria and Ukraine. The trickle of statements, hints and leaks from Moscow gave the impression that Russian officials were taking the lead in following up on the summit meeting.

Russia’s Defense Ministry, for example, said on Friday that it had sent to the United States a proposal to expand cooperation in Syria beyond military “de-conflicting” — ensuring Russian and American forces do not inadvertently target one another — to include the repatriation of refugees and the financing of reconstruction.

“Progress in this area was enabled by an agreement, reached by the presidents of Russia and the United States, during the meeting in Helsinki,” Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev told journalists in a briefing at the Russian general staff headquarters.

The Russian proposal calls for creating a Russian-American group to work on the return of Syrian refugees from Jordan and Lebanon. General Mizintsev said the “American side is now working on the Russian proposal” though there was no immediate response to the idea from Washington.

The flow of statements from Moscow at times appeared to catch United States officials unaware, and in some instances seemed at odds with American positions.

The American general overseeing operations in Syria, Gen. Joseph L. Votel, said on Thursday that he had received no new directions from Washington. And the United States and its European allies have long insisted they will not pay for postwar reconstruction in areas controlled by the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad.

Russian officials have also spoken openly of a diplomatic effort to manage the defeat of rebel groups in southern Syria that were once backed by the United States. Mr. Trump has offered only hints about that effort.

On Tuesday, Mr. Trump said, “We discussed Israel and the security of Israel, and President Putin is very much involved now with us in a discussion with Bibi

Netanyahu" — Israel's leader — "in working something out surrounding Syria."

Mr. Assad's army, with Russian backing, has pushed into a southern region of Syria along the border of the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. The Russians have suggested the diplomacy has focused on excluding troops and proxies of Iran, another ally of Mr. Assad, from newly seized land along that border.

Russia's ambassador to Israel, Anatoly Viktorov, said Friday that Moscow and Israel had discussed the border region and had "reached an understanding on how it will look" after the rebels' defeat. He said the agreement specified that "certain units will abandon the territory," an apparent reference to Iranian paramilitaries.

In the run-up to the summit, Mr. Putin and his diplomats met the leaders of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Qatar; senior diplomats from Oman and Jordan; and two close advisers to the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

But it was unclear what assurances Mr. Putin could have offered Mr. Trump. Russian Middle East experts said Moscow's leverage in the messy Syrian civil war was limited despite its efforts to position itself as a broker.

Russian officials also described a proposal by Mr. Putin to hold a referendum on the future of Donbas in eastern Ukraine, a coal mining and steel-smelting region that has been gripped by four years of war between Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian government.

The Ukrainians say any such vote would be manipulated and meaningless as long as Russian troops and Russian-backed paramilitaries control the territory. An election in the war zone would also have to address a thorny issue of voting rights for refugees and internally displaced people.

Mr. Putin described the referendum proposal on Thursday to a gathering of Russian diplomats that was closed to the media, but participants soon confirmed his comments to Bloomberg, which first reported the offer.

While American officials were silent about the proposal until Friday, there seemed to be little effort to keep it under wraps in Moscow.

Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, told a conference in Moscow on Friday that Mr. Putin had offered Mr. Trump, "specific proposals for resolving this question," and a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said it was time to "discuss other options" in Ukraine, apparently a reference to a referendum.

On his Twitter account on Thursday, Mr. Trump cited talks on Ukraine as part of the "great success" of the summit, but did not offer any clarification.

In a sign of how unnerving Russia's statements had become, Ukrainian politicians pleaded publicly with the administration to take a stand against the referendum.

"President Putin's proposals are always deceptive," Arseniy Yatsenyuk, a former prime minister, wrote on Facebook. "This is a negotiating trap."

Only on Friday did a spokesman for the National Security Council, Garrett Marquis, finally dismiss the idea. "The administration is not considering supporting a referendum in eastern Ukraine" he said.

Tymofiy Mylovanov, a professor at the Kyiv School of Economics, said the proposal and initial American silence on the matter was dangerous for Ukraine by allowing Russia to appear to "control the narrative," in Ukraine as elsewhere.

Russian Billionaire With U.S. Investments Backed Alleged Agent Maria Butina, According To A Person Familiar With Her Senate Testimony

By Rosalind S. Helderman

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

Maria Butina, the Russian woman charged in federal court last week with acting as an unregistered agent of her government, received financial support from Konstantin Nikolaev, a Russian billionaire with investments in U.S. energy and technology companies, according to a person familiar with testimony she gave Senate investigators.

Butina told the Senate Intelligence Committee in April that Nikolaev provided funding for a gun rights group she represented, according to the person. A spokesman for Nikolaev confirmed that he was in contact with her as she was launching the gun rights group in Russia between 2012 and 2014. He declined to confirm whether Nikolaev gave her financial support.

Nikolaev's fortune has been built largely through port and railroad investments in Russia. He also sits on the board of American Ethane, a Houston ethane company that was showcased by President Trump at an event in China last year, and is an investor in a Silicon Valley start-up.

Nikolaev has never met Trump, according to his spokesman.

However, Nikolaev's son Andrey, who is studying in the United States, volunteered in the 2016 campaign in support of Trump's candidacy, according a person familiar with his activities. Nikolaev was spotted at the Trump International Hotel in Washington during Trump's inauguration in January 2017, according to two people aware of his presence.

In a court filing last week, prosecutors said Butina's emails and chat logs are full of references to a billionaire as the "funder" of her activities. They wrote that the billionaire is a "known Russian businessman with deep ties to the Russian Presidential Administration."

Prosecutors did not identify Butina's funder by name but said he travels often to the United States and was listed by Forbes this year as having a net worth of \$1.2 billion — which is the same as Nikolaev's current listing.

Butina was ordered held without bond last week after she was charged with conspiring to work as a Russian agent. Prosecutors allege that she sought to meet GOP politicians and infiltrate conservative organizations, including the National Rifle Association, at the direction of a Russian government official, in an attempt to advance the Kremlin's interests.

According to prosecutors, for two years she traveled back and forth to the United States, often accompanying Russian central banker Alexander Torshin to NRA events and other political meetings. Prosecutors have said her activities were directed by a high-level Russian government official who matches the description of Torshin.

In August 2016, she came to Washington to study full time as a graduate student at American University.

Butina's lawyer, Robert Driscoll, has said she is not a Russian agent but rather a student interested in learning about the American political system. The Russian government has proclaimed Butina's innocence, promoting the hashtag #freeMariaButina on social media. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pressed Butina's case with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a phone call Saturday, according to a statement by the Russian government.

Driscoll declined to comment on Nikolaev but said that the Russian businessman cited by prosecutors was a financial supporter of the gun rights group Butina founded in Russia, the Right to Bear Arms. She met him in person only twice, he said.

Prosecutors cited Butina's interactions with the Russian billionaire to argue she should not be allowed out of jail while awaiting trial. They argued that she has "ties to the Russian oligarchy" and knows wealthy men who could be in a position to offer her "safe harbor" if she decided to flee the United States.

Nikolaev last had contact with the Russian activist in 2014, according to his spokesman, who said that at the time, Butina had a "public profile in Russia as a blogger on key domestic issues that were of interest."

Nikolaev's connections to the Russian government "cannot be characterized as deep," his spokesman said.

"Mr. Nikolaev has no connections to the Russian government other than those that are strictly required professionally," said the spokesman, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing investigation.

He declined to offer details about the political volunteer work by Andrey, Nikolaev's son.

"Like countless other young people studying in the U.S., Andrey volunteered to hand out leaflets just for the experience," he said.

Andrey Nikolaev did not respond to a request through the spokesman for comment. Trump campaign officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Konstantin Nikolaev is a major investor in American Ethane and sits on the company's board.

The company was spotlighted by Trump during a visit to Beijing in November. During the trip, Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over a ceremony in which U.S. companies publicly signed deals with Chinese partners. One of the 15 deals deal inked at the event was a \$26 billion deal for American Ethane to deliver liquid ethane to China.

At the event, Trump and Xi sat on a raised stage and applauded while executives, including American Ethane chief executive John Houghtaling II, came forward to sign trade deals at a table festooned with American and Chinese flags.

The White House declined to comment. Houghtaling declined to comment, except to say that Nikolaev had no role in the China deal or the Beijing ceremony.

Nikolaev has also put money into other U.S. companies. In 2016, he invested in a San Francisco start-up called Grabr, according to a company news release. Grabr operates an online service that allows shoppers to buy unusual products internationally by enlisting the help of ordinary international travelers willing to buy and transport goods for a fee.

Another investor in Grabr, according to the company, is Alexey Repik, a Russian pharmaceutical executive who attended Trump's inauguration and had access to an array of exclusive events.

Repik said he is a minor investor in Grabr with Nikolaev but that the two are not close. He said he does not know Butina or support pro-gun efforts.

It is unclear if Nikolaev also attended any official inaugural events, but he was seen at Trump's D.C. hotel, which served as hub of inauguration celebrations. His spokesman declined to comment on what he was doing there.

Also in town for the festivities: Butina, who made an appearance at one of the inaugural balls, according to a person aware of her attendance. Last week,

prosecutors submitted as evidence a selfie she snapped in front of the Capitol during the swearing-in ceremony.

Alleged Spy Told Senate Panel About Backing From Russian Billionaire

By Eli Watkins And Jeremy Herb

[CNN](#), July 22, 2018

Washington (CNN) Maria Butina, the recently indicted Russian national accused of being an agent of Russia, told the Senate Intelligence Committee earlier this year that Russian billionaire Konstantin Nikolaev had backed her financially, a source familiar with her testimony told CNN.

Butina made international headlines last week when the Justice Department announced her arrest and a grand jury formally approved charges of conspiracy and acting as a foreign agent. The federal case has added to a growing picture of undisclosed foreign attempts to lobby in the US and alleged Russian influence in the political system.

CNN has reached out to Nikolaev through his company for comment.

The charges against her came after she gained the attention of lawmakers investigating allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 election, and in April, she sat for eight hours of testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The Washington Post first reported on this element of Butina's testimony. Additionally, Nikolaev's son supported President Donald Trump's candidacy in the 2016 election, the Post reported, citing a person familiar with his son's activities, and Nikolaev himself was seen at the Trump International Hotel in Washington during Trump's inauguration, the newspaper said, citing two people aware of his presence.

Butina, along with her mentor, Kremlin-linked banker Alexander Torshin, worked for years to establish communications in the US for Russia, according to court filings and previous CNN reporting, and used the National Rifle Association as a major avenue of influence.

Butina, a gun rights activist, founded a pro-gun group in Russia called Right to Bear Arms, which Butina told the Senate panel was the recipient of Nikolaev's funding, a person familiar with her testimony told the Post.

Nikolaev was in contact with Butina as she launched the group between 2012 and 2014, a spokesman for the billionaire told the Post. The spokesman declined to confirm to the Post whether Nikolaev gave her financial support.

Robert Driscoll, Butina's attorney, has pushed back strongly on the accusations against Butina and told CNN on Friday that much of the US government's case against her was "taken completely out of context."

CNN's Emma Burrows contributed to this report.

Russia's Foreign Minister To Pompeo: Free Maria Butina

By Chuck Ross |

[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

Maria Butina, the Russian woman accused of spying for the Russian government, has been arrested on "fabricated charges" and should be released from jail, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov argued in a phone conversation on Saturday with his American counterpart, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Lavrov stressed "the unacceptability of the actions of the US authorities, who have arrested Russian citizen Maria Butina in the United States o

n the basis of fabricated charges, and the need for her early release," according to a statement

from the Russian foreign ministry.

Butina, 29, was indicted on Tuesday on charges of conspiracy and acting as a foreign agent of Russia. The Justice Department accuses her of working at the direction of Alexander Torshin, the deputy chief of Russia's central bank, to infiltrate American political groups. Butina and Torshin were known to have made close contacts with leaders of the National Rifle Association. (RELATED: Gov't Accuses Maria Butina Of Offering Sex For Access To Political Group)

A federal judge decided Wednesday that Butina will remain in jail while she awaits trial. The Justice Department argued that she posed a flight risk because of her contacts with Russian government officials.

The DOJ said in a memo that the government has evidence that Butina maintained contacts with members of Russia's foreign intelligence service, the FSB. She also referred in messages with Torshin to a Russian billionaire as a "funder" of her activities.

The government argued that Butina could either flee the U.S. or enter the Russian embassy, where she would have safe harbor.

Butina was also in a romantic relationship with a Republican political operative named Paul Erickson. Erickson closely matches the description of "U.S. Person 1" in the Justice Department's filings in the Butina case. The person is described as being "instrumental in aiding her covert influence operation."

Erickson has not been accused of wrongdoing, and it is unclear if he knew what Butina was up to or helped her unwittingly.

In May 2016, Erickson sent an email to Trump campaign official Rick Dearborn offering to set up a meeting between Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin. In the email, entitled "Kremlin Connection," Erickson said that Torshin would act as Putin's intermediary.

The meeting did not occur, though Torshin did briefly meet Donald Trump Jr. on the sidelines of an event at the NRA convention in May 2016.

The Justice Department suggested in its court filings that Butina was not entirely open with Erickson about her motives.

In its memo, U.S. attorney Jessie Lieu wrote that "Butina offered an individual other than U.S. Person 1 sex in exchange for a position within a special interest organization." Butina also complained to Torshin about having to live with Erickson.

The State Department could not be reached for comment about the Lavrov-Pompeo phone call.

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Republicans Have An Alger Hiss Problem Named Mariia

By Bill Scher

[Politico Magazine](#), July 21, 2018

Alleged Russian spy Mariia Butina was arrested just a few days short of the 70th anniversary of the last major accusation of Russian infiltration in America's political system: when on Aug. 3, 1948, Time editor and ex-communist Whittaker Chambers publicly accused former high-ranking State Department official Alger Hiss of being a Soviet agent.

Rattled Democrats, including President Harry Truman, handled the fallout poorly, hesitating to distance themselves from Hiss and unwittingly feeding a conservative narrative that they were soft on communism.

Republicans are now having their own Alger Hiss moment. Butina's alleged efforts to ingratiate herself with conservative movement organizations and the Republican Party shows that Russia's interest in Trump is not an operation focused on one man. As explained in the Justice Department affidavit, in October 2016 Butina reported to her Russian mentor that Republicans "are for us" and Democrats "against." This is not just about one seductive spy, or even one president; it's about how intertwined Russia and the Republican Party are

becoming, and whether the Republican Party is willing and able to disentangle itself.

Hiss was convicted of perjury in 1950, for falsely denying in his 1948 congressional testimony that he gave Chambers confidential State Department documents to be delivered to the Soviets. He served 44 months in prison, then spent the next 42 years maintaining his innocence, ever after intercepts declassified just before his death strongly indicated Hiss was a Soviet agent for years.

Shortly before his fall, Hiss had risen high enough in the State Department to serve as the acting secretary-general of the United Nations, during the 1945 San Francisco conference that finalized the international organization's charter. When rumors of his Soviet ties prompted his resignation at the end of 1946, his reputation remained strong enough for a Republican, John Foster Dulles, to engineer a smooth transition into the presidency of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His guilt, while hotly debated for decades, left a lingering stain on the Democratic Party and on liberalism, making it difficult for the party to win the public trust on matters both foreign and domestic. If Republicans handle their Alger Hiss moment as awkwardly as Democrats did, they face a similar fate.

Why was Hiss such a touchstone for the Cold War era? Because for much of the left, he was an honorable man who served 14 years in three government departments during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, only to be smeared in a wave of anti-communist hysteria. For the right, he was proof that communists were crawling throughout our government and that liberal Democrats should be suspected of harboring secret, anti-American agendas. As Chambers wrote in "Witness," when he fingered Hiss and "aimed at Communism," he also struck out at "the forces of that great socialist revolution, which in the name of liberalism ... has been inching its ice cap over the nation for two decades." Once Hiss served time – even though he was never convicted of espionage — the right had the upper hand in the argument.

The case marked the beginning of the post-World War II ideological fault lines that would shape American politics during the Cold War. The dueling testimonies of Chambers and Hiss to the House Un-American Activities Committee riveted the nation. The relentless pursuit of Hiss made a young congressman from California – Richard Nixon – a rock star in his party before there were rock stars. Days after Hiss's conviction in 1950, Sen. Joseph McCarthy infamously took the anti-communist crusade to the next level, waving a long list of names he dubiously claimed were Communist Party members working in the State Department.

The Truman administration was blindsided, though it shouldn't have been. The FBI had been investigating Hiss in 1945 and 1946, and then-Secretary of State Jimmy Byrnes and Under Secretary Dean Acheson were fully aware (though Truman may have not been). That scrutiny led to Hiss's quiet resignation. And yet, Truman condemned the 1948 hearings as "a red herring" that was "serving no useful purpose" and "slandering a lot of people that don't deserve it." After the conviction, Acheson, now secretary of state, remained loyal to his longtime friend. "Whatever the outcome of any appeal ... I do not intend to turn my back on Alger Hiss," said Acheson, citing the Gospel of Matthew for good measure ("I was in prison and ye came unto me.") All Truman would offer was a less dramatic "no comment."

Their posture was politically devastating, especially since the Hiss case overlapped with the communist takeover of China. Truman and Acheson "lost China," conservative Republicans thundered. One Republican senator even speculated that Hiss had shaped the State Department's China policy.

The 1952 Democratic presidential nominee, Adlai Stevenson, suffered as well. In 1949 he had given a deposition for the perjury trial in which he said Hiss had a "good" reputation and that he hadn't heard any speculation of communist sympathies. The Republican vice-presidential nominee, the newly famous Nixon, hammered Stevenson for bad judgment. The man at the top of the ticket, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, campaigned with McCarthy and charged that communism had "poisoned two whole decades of our national life." Stevenson won just nine states.

The cruel irony was that Truman and Acheson were no softies when it came to communism. They were the architects of the anti-communist, quasi-militaristic "containment" strategy after World War II, a policy both credited for ultimately winning the Cold War and maligned for goading the U.S. into the messy Korean and Vietnam wars — hardly evidence of communist control of the State Department.

The Truman administration received little contemporaneous credit for "containment" at the time, thanks to the triumph of Mao in China and the unpopularity of the inconclusive Korean War. There's not much Truman and Acheson could have done about those events (short of staying out of Korea and allowing it to follow China's lead) but they could have taken the Hiss scandal far more seriously.

Acheson was blinded by friendship. Truman genuinely believed there was little to it, not just Hiss but the whole, in his words, "communist bugaboo." A year and a half before the Hiss revelations, Truman had already been pressured to install a "loyalty" program for

federal employees, which vetted three million people through 1951. Several thousand resigned, but no one was indicted for spying.

That wasn't good enough in the wake of the Hiss conviction. In retrospect, Truman and Acheson would have had far more credibility — and perhaps could have even blunted McCarthy's witch hunt — if they had expressed their own outrage after the Chambers allegations and renewed their vows to eradicate any communist traces in government.

Fast forward to today. We have evidence of a Russian spy infiltrating the conservative movement and the Republican Party in order to influence U.S. politics and foreign policy. We have copious evidence of Russian meddling in the 2016 election to help elect a Republican president, who has proceeded to frequently parrot the Putin line.

Surely, our conservative elder statesmen, who for years crowed about Hiss, wouldn't repeat the same mistakes as Truman's Democrats. Right?

If anyone should have learned political lessons from the Alger Hiss affair, it should have been the fervently anti-Russia yet pro-Trump conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt. One of his radio show trademarks is asking first-time liberal guests whether they believe Hiss was a communist and a spy. If guests say no or dodge the question, unable to allow Hiss's culpability to complicate the liberal narrative of a 1950s sullied by McCarthyism, Hewitt shreds their credibility.

Hewitt, like most Republican officeholders and conservative media figures, expressed disappointment at Trump's performance in Helsinki, but treated the president as if he had goofed rather than actively pursued a strategy of closer ties with Putin. "Every presidency has a worst day. I hope and pray yesterday was that," Hewitt tweeted. On air, he lamented that Trump got "played" and conceded, "I thought he could handle Putin, and I was wrong."

Hewitt notably drew a connection between the Hiss and Butina cases, posting on Twitter that Butina is "not a one-off." But he's not dwelling on it. He offered no scolding of Butina's conservative abettors. And he proceeded to criticize the latest indictments issued by the special counsel of 12 Russian officers for being issued just before Trump traveled to Helsinki, echoing his on-air guest Alan Dershowitz's opinion that the Justice Department is inappropriately interfering with foreign policy. If one were genuinely horrified by Trump's foreign policy agenda, interference with it would not be one's top concern. (It's also worth noting that, according to Bloomberg, the DOJ gave Trump the option of having the indictments made public after the summit, and he chose to do so beforehand.)

Other prominent Republicans also stopped well short of determined outrage in the face of increased Russian infiltration and influence. The typical Republican reaction on Capitol Hill was to welcome Trump's grudging, not-so-credible walkback from a few of his Helsinki comments. On the Butina case, we mostly hear silence from conservatives — including from Butina's main mark, the NRA — though Fox News host Tucker Carlson spent three minutes with the Washington Examiner's Byron York downplaying the charges. And some fringe right-wing voices are even thanking Russians for their participation in American politics; they saved us from Hillary Clinton after all. (One exception on the Right: Daily Beast columnist and my "The DMZ" podcast co-host Matt Lewis, who explored why conservatives have become "vulnerable to being duped.")

Even among Putin critics, flirtations with Russia don't enrage conservatives today the way they did 70 years ago because we are not presently in a titanic struggle between communism and capitalism that seems to threaten the American way of life. Of course, at the time when Hiss and a handful of others lower in the Roosevelt administration were part of the "communist underground" in the 1930s, the Cold War had not yet begun, and during World War II, America and the Soviet Union were allies of convenience.

Chambers' biographer, Sam Tanenhaus, suggested Hiss and others "functioned less as moles than as ideological freelancers ... trimming the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union ... These were not dual loyalties; they were negotiable loyalties." Another prominent New Dealer fingered by Chambers as a Soviet informant, Assistant Treasury Secretary Harry Dexter White, was described by historian Stephen Schlesinger as someone who "wanted to help the Russians but did not regard the actions he took as constituting espionage." However, their actions looked much different when they came to light after World War II ended and the Iron Curtain came down.

Conservatives who have reveled in the history of Alger Hiss should be acutely aware of the risks inherent to guilt-by-Russian-association, and should be doing everything in their power to fully sever those associations. Granted, this is easier said than done. The contemporary figure who most closely parallels Hiss is not Butina, but Trump. Butina is a Russian who can easily be cast aside. But polling still suggests that rank-and-file Republicans are unfazed by Trump's ties to Russia — the vast majority of Republicans approved of Trump's performance in Helsinki. For a Republican

officeholder to vociferously attack Trump as a Putin ally is to risk losing office in a Republican primary.

But conservatives have long lionized Chambers for being a brave truth-teller. They may wish to re-read his memoir, which begins with his pessimistic belief that by leaving the Communist Party, he was "leaving the winning world for the losing world." Still, it was better "to die, if necessary, rather than to live under Communism."

Soviet communism is dead. But Putinism lives, and is all too often echoed by Trump and his loyalists. Republicans have a choice to make: Repeat the mistakes made by Alger Hiss' defenders out of short-term political expediency, or live up to the honorable example set by Whittaker Chambers, even if it means taking the chance of joining the losing world.

Bill Scher is a contributing editor to Politico Magazine, and co-host of the Bloggingheads.tv show "The DMZ."

Accused Russian Agent Butina Met With U.S. Treasury, Fed Officials

By Sarah N. Lynch

[Reuters \(UK\)](#), July 22, 2018

Accused Russian agent Maria Butina had wider high-level contacts in Washington than previously known, taking part in 2015 meetings between a visiting Russian official and two senior officials at the U.S. Federal Reserve and Treasury Department.

The meetings, revealed by several people familiar with the sessions and a report from a Washington think tank that arranged them, involved Stanley Fischer, Fed vice chairman at the time, and Nathan Sheets, then Treasury undersecretary for international affairs.

Butina travelled to the United States in April 2015 with Alexander Torshin, then the Russian Central Bank deputy governor, and they took part in separate meetings with Fischer and Sheets to discuss U.S.-Russian economic relations during Democratic former President Barack Obama's administration.

The two meetings, which have not been previously reported, reveal a wider circle of high-powered connections that Butina sought to cultivate with American political leaders and special interest groups.

Butina's lawyer, Robert Driscoll, did not have any details about her participation in meetings with Treasury and Federal Reserve officials when asked about them on Friday.

The meetings with Fischer and Sheets were arranged by the Center for the National Interest, a Washington foreign policy think tank that often advocates pro-Russia views.

The meetings were documented in a Center for the National Interest report seen by Reuters that outlined its Russia-related activities from 2013 to 2015. The report described the meetings as helping bring together “leading figures from the financial institutions of the United States and Russia.”

A judge on Wednesday ordered Butina, 29, jailed until her trial after U.S. prosecutors argued she has ties to Russian intelligence and could flee the United States. Butina has pleaded not guilty to charges she acted as a foreign agent for Russia. She is scheduled to appear in court on Wednesday for a status conference in her case.

Butina worked for Torshin, who has close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and served as his interpreter at various Washington events.

Fischer, in an email to Reuters, confirmed he met with Torshin and his interpreter. While he could not recall details, Fischer said the conversation involved “the state of the Russian economy” and Torshin’s new role as deputy central bank governor.

Another person familiar with the meeting, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it occurred on April 7, 2015, and confirmed Butina attended.

Federal prosecutors have accused Butina of conspiring with two American citizens and a top Russian official to influence U.S. policy toward Russia and infiltrate a gun rights group believed to be the National Rifle Association. The NRA is an influential pro-gun lobby with close ties to Republican politicians including President Donald Trump.

Questions relating to Russia have cast a cloud over Trump’s presidency.

The description of the top Russian official mentioned in the indictment matches Torshin. The indictment said that beginning in about 2015 Butina and the official conspired to “advance the interests of the Russian Federation.”

“I recall Mr. Torshin mentioning, as an aside, that he planned to attend a meeting of the National Rifle Association, a fact that I considered irrelevant to our conversation,” Fischer wrote to Reuters.

Sheets declined to comment through Ted Smith, a spokesman for asset management firm PGIM, where Sheets currently works.

Fischer and Sheets met with many international banking officials as part of their official duties.

The Treasury Department in April imposed sanctions on Torshin and a number of other Russian businessmen and government officials in Putin’s inner circle.

The think tank hosted Trump at an event at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington in April 2016 also

attended by Sergei Kislyak, Russia’s ambassador to Washington at the time.

The April 2015 visit by Butina and Torshin came about a year after Obama’s administration imposed sanctions on Russia for its annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea region.

Two months earlier, in February 2015, the group’s Russian-born CEO, Dimitri Simes, travelled to Moscow, where he met with Putin and other Russian officials, the organization’s records showed.

During the same April 2015 trip, Torshin and Butina also participated in a private “off the record” discussion at the center about the “Russian financial situation and its impact on Russian politics,” according to people familiar with the meeting and the think tank’s report. That event was moderated by the group’s chairman emeritus, former AIG CEO Maurice “Hank” Greenberg, the report showed. Greenberg did not return calls for comment.

Among the think tank’s board members is David Keene, a former NRA president and former chairman of the American Conservative Union. Keene has previously been photographed alongside Butina at events.

Paul Saunders, the think tank’s executive director, said Torshin spoke at an April 2015 event about the Russian banking system and Butina attended. Saunders said people at the organization cannot recall details of Torshin’s presentation.

“We were unaware of any charges or suspicions of illegal or inappropriate conduct or of any connections to Russian intelligence services,” Saunders said in an email.

Prosecutors said the think tank’s magazine published an article by Butina in June 2015 in which she said “certain U.S. politicians and Russians share many common interests.”

Accused Russian Agent Says She Was Twice Denied Visas To Travel To U.S.

By Josh Meyer

[Politico](#), July 20, 2018

Mariia Butina, the Russian gun enthusiast who was accused this week of acting as an illegal foreign agent, said in 2014 that she was twice denied visas to travel to the U.S. and received permission only on her third attempt to go to a National Rifle Association conference.

On April 25, 2014, Butina — who on Wednesday was ordered to be held in jail pending trial — posted to her LiveJournal blog from Indianapolis, where she was attending the NRA’s annual “congress” as the leader of the Right to Bear Arms organization, which advocates looser gun control policies in Russia.

"I only got a visa to the United States for annual NRA meetings on the third try. Before that, I missed these congresses for two years because of the opposition of the American government bureaucracy," said the post, which includes photos of her with NRA leaders and other attendees.

"Finally, the leadership of the NRA itself [came] to visit us, after which it was possible to prove that I would not stay in the US, and I went there on business," Butina wrote at the time, referencing a trip to Moscow several months earlier by former NRA President David Keene; a prominent NRA booster and longtime Republican operative, Paul Erickson; and other gun rights luminaries.

Butina's social media post shows that the U.S. government may have had concerns about her long before prosecutors formally accused her of acting as a foreign agent. That post, along with others reviewed by POLITICO, also offers a window into how Butina used her NRA ties to help establish her first inroads in the United States, where the Justice Department now alleges she waged a clandestine Kremlin "influence operation" to push an unnamed political party, which matches the description of the Republican Party, toward a more pro-Russia stance.

She at times linked to the LiveJournal blog, which was in her native Russian, from her Twitter account.

Butina did not say in her 2014 post whether NRA officials took any actions to help her overcome the U.S. government's objections to her visa requests. The NRA did not respond to requests for comment about its relationship with Butina. In the past, it has denied wrongdoing — unintentional or otherwise — in connection with its dealings with Russian entities.

Keene did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. Erickson could not be reached for comment. His voicemail was full, and he did not respond to a text message seeking comment.

Butina's lawyer, Robert Driscoll, said he could not discuss any details of her case, including her efforts to get a visa and her dealings with NRA officials.

CNN first reported that Butina was twice denied visas.

One person close to the investigation said it was likely that Butina's formal role in NRA events helped her secure a visa to come to the U.S. for the 2014 conference. "I assume that by providing the destination as being an NRA conference, it helps to get a visa," the person told POLITICO.

U.S. officials this week alleged that Butina, 29, worked from 2015 until at least February 2017 as a covert Kremlin agent under the direction of a top Russian government official and central banker. The

description in court documents matched that of Alexander Torshin, a close associate of President Vladimir Putin.

As part of that effort, prosecutors say, the pair worked to infiltrate a gun rights group, which matches the description of the NRA, and other conservative American organizations in order to establish back-channel lines of communication with influential U.S. political leaders and "penetrate the U.S. national decision-making apparatus to advance the agenda of the Russian Federation," according to an affidavit by an FBI agent in support of the case.

Butina, who was arrested Sunday and charged Monday, has denied the Justice Department's allegations, according to Driscoll. She pleaded not guilty Wednesday to federal charges including failing to register as a foreign agent with the Justice Department.

For more than a year, U.S. authorities also have been investigating whether Butina and Torshin were part of a plot to funnel Russian money through the NRA to the Trump campaign as part of the broader influence operation. Since June 2017, FBI agents have had Butina under active surveillance, Driscoll said Wednesday. In court, prosecutors partially confirmed that by introducing into evidence a photograph that they said showed Butina having dinner with a Russian intelligence agent several months ago.

A review of Butina's prolific social media activity, including Twitter posts, shows that she was dedicated to developing close relationships with numerous senior NRA figures over the past five years. And the Justice Department released emails and other communications in which she discussed using her close ties to a guns group as a way to influence U.S. politics.

In her LiveJournal post from 2014, Butina said she attended the NRA convention to represent her Right to Bear Arms organization "as part of the exchange of experience and international cooperation."

Two weeks later, she told the conservative TownHall publication that she got her visa just days before the NRA event started and that she attended the annual NRA Women's Leadership Luncheon as a guest of former NRA President Sandy Froman. Butina said she participated in other meetings and events as a guest of former NRA President Keene, including attending the Golden Ring of Freedom ceremony and speaking to the elite group of NRA donors who give \$1 million or more. She also was given "the rare privilege" of ringing the NRA Liberty Bell at the Ring of Freedom event, calling out, "For the rights to arms for citizens around the world," she recounted later in a tweet. Froman did not return calls and emails seeking comment.

After Indianapolis, Butina told her blog followers, she planned to attend “an exchange of experience in the Washington office of NRA and many other interesting things.” She tweeted about the visit, posting a photo of herself and Keene in front of the organization’s glass headquarters.

The plan to use a guns group in the U.S. for the benefit of Russia began before that, according to court documents and interviews.

By 2011, Torshin had begun cultivating relationships with NRA officials and attending every annual NRA convention in the U.S. and other events, often as a special guest of NRA leadership. That year, Butina launched her gun rights group, saying she learned to use firearms while hunting bears and wolves in her native Siberia.

She soon achieved notoriety, in Russia and beyond, by being one of the few people — especially women — pushing handgun rights in a country that officially discouraged it.

In 2013, the NRA’s Keene, its president until earlier that year, was an honored guest at a conference of Butina’s Right to Bear Arms organization. Prosecutors say it was on that trip in November 2013 that Butina met an unnamed U.S. person whose description matches that of Erickson and began a long and close relationship that would become a central focus of her work as a Russian agent in the U.S.

By then, prosecutors now say, Butina was a “special assistant” on the covert influence operation working with the Russian who matches Torshin’s description.

On the 2014 trip to the U.S., Butina posed for photos and gave then-NRA President James Porter a gift from her organization, she noted in her LiveJournal posts, saying, “Mission accomplished.”

Butina would go on to attend the annual NRA conventions in 2015 and 2016, posting online and being photographed with Froman, NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre and other organization leaders, and Republican stalwarts like Rick Santorum and Tom Delay. At the 2015 convention in Tennessee, she spoke Russian with Scott Walker, she said on social media. Walker’s “Our American Revival” political committee also posted several photos of Walker, Butina and Torshin on its website. That July, Butina flew to Waukesha, Wisconsin, to attend Walker’s launch of his presidential bid. She posted photos of that event on Facebook and Twitter too. When Walker’s campaign fizzled, she focused her attention on the Trump campaign, according to her social media posts and Justice Department documents.

In December 2015, the NRA sent another delegation to Moscow to meet with Butina’s group.

Keene went on that trip, too, along with then-NRA First Vice President Pete Brownell, who soon became NRA president, and Joe Gregory, chairman of NRA’s Golden Ring of Freedom, according to tweets from Torshin, other Russian officials and public records. An NRA committee member and surrogate, then-Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke, also attended, and later disclosed in public reports that Right to Bear Arms paid \$6,000 of his travel expenses.

Before the 2016 NRA convention in Louisville, Kentucky, Butina and Torshin worked through intermediaries to try to arrange a “backdoor” channel between Putin and Trump, claiming that Torshin was acting at the behest of the Russian president, according to emails handed over to Senate investigators and published by The New York Times. That effort was rejected by the Trump campaign, but Torshin met briefly with Donald Trump Jr. at a campaign-related event. A lawyer for President Trump’s eldest son told reporters that the meeting was brief and inconsequential.

Butina later accompanied Erickson to Trump’s inauguration, including at least one VIP event attended by other Russians, according to media reports.

The FBI agent’s affidavit said that after infiltrating the gun-rights group and other organizations, Butina reported back “to Moscow the results of the various encounters with the U.S. politicians and political candidates.”

The effort, the agent wrote, also appeared to involve more than just Butina and her Russian contact.

The plan, FBI Special Agent Kevin Helson wrote, also involved the help of others in the form of “substantial planning, international coordination, and preparation.”

Lawyer For Accused Russian Agent: US Using Info ‘Taken Completely Out Of Context’

By David Shortell

[CNN](#), July 20, 2018

(CNN)The attorney for the 29-year-old Russian woman accused of trying to win influence in American political circles as a secret agent for her home country pushed back on the US government portrayal of his client as a spy in an interview televised on CNN.

Speaking Friday evening with Anderson Cooper on “Anderson Cooper 360,” Robert Driscoll, the attorney for Maria Butina, challenged several of the points made by prosecutors in court filings and a hearing this week in DC federal court, offering instead an image of an ambitious graduate student.

Butina is accused of using sex and lying on official paperwork to build a network into political organizations including the National Rifle Association in the months leading up to the 2016 election. She's pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy and acting as a foreign agent.

In the interview, Cooper read Driscoll several Twitter direct messages Butina had allegedly sent her mentor, Russian politician Alexander Torshin, including one where she wrote asking for "further orders."

"I think that, like most of the government's case, is taken completely out of context," Driscoll said. "Those Twitter DMs – which, by the way, most Russian spies don't communicate by Twitter DM – which are unencrypted, there's thousands of them. ... There's Twitter DMs about picking up toothpaste in America. There's DMs with pictures of kids and dogs and everything else."

"I think that for a woman who's been under surveillance for the better part of two years, it's pretty thin gruel to find a two-year-old ... message, and say that that proves she's a spy. Most spies do things. She didn't seek nuclear submarine plans, she didn't try to recruit any agents, she didn't pay anyone any money," Driscoll said.

Maria Butina's many roles: Grad student. Gun rights activist. Alleged Russian agent.

Cooper retorted: "I guess the government would say, 'Whether or not she was a good spy or not isn't really the issue, it's what her intent was.'"

Butina is "doing fine under the circumstances" and is "confident in her innocence," said Driscoll, who had visited her in jail earlier in the day.

He is trying to take her books while she remains detained "to make life a little more bearable."

Driscoll, a former high-ranking Justice Department official, said he was first approached by Butina for representation after she was asked to interview with the Senate Intelligence Committee earlier this year. He would not say how she was paying for his services.

Butina in April voluntarily gave the Senate panel an eight-hour interview and thousands of documents.

In a court filing earlier this week, the government accused her of offering to trade sex for a spot "within a special interest organization," a claim her lawyer called "unfortunate."

How Mark Sanford met Maria Butina

"The government kind of dropped those allegations without any evidence," Driscoll said. "I frankly find it kind of offensive – just because she's an attractive woman, that's the direction people go in."

Driscoll also said he had never represented Butina's long-term boyfriend, a 56-year-old South Dakota political operative named Paul Erickson who CNN has

identified as an unnamed person linked to Butina's charges in court documents.

In one court filing, prosecutors say they found a note in Erickson's apartment with the question "How to respond to FSB offer of employment?" written in Erickson's handwriting.

Asked about the line, which refers to the Russian spy agency, Driscoll said, "I don't think it's up for her to explain that."

Driscoll also explained away a government allegation that Butina was in contact with FSB agents herself because she had an email address for one listed on her phone.

"She has hundreds of contacts. Maybe she has a friend that had an FSB extension," Driscoll said.

Russia Tells Pompeo That U.S. Arrest Of Butina Is Unacceptable

By Anatoly Medetsky

[Bloomberg News](#), July 21, 2018

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the U.S. arrest of Russian Maria Butina on suspicion of trying to infiltrate Republican circles and acting as an unregistered foreign agent was unacceptable.

In a telephone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, the top Russian diplomat said the charges against Butina were fabricated and called for her prompt release, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Butina was ordered jailed in the U.S. on July 19 until her trial on charges she conspired to establish a back channel between Russians and American politicians. She faces an additional charge of operating in the U.S. as an unregistered agent of Russia. Prosecutors said she had ties to Russia's intelligence services and oligarchs who could offer her safe harbor. She pled not guilty.

Among other issues, Lavrov and Pompeo also discussed possible cooperation between Russia, the U.S. and other countries in solving Syria's humanitarian crisis. They also talked about efforts to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

The case is U.S. v. Butina, 18-cr-00218, U.S. District Court, District of Columbia (Washington).

Russian Diplomat Calls On Pompeo To Free Accused Russian Agent

By John Bowden

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

Russia's top diplomat is calling on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to free a Russian woman accused

of acting as an unregistered foreign agent in the United States.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Saturday that Maria Butina had been detained on “fabricated charges” and called for her release as soon as possible, Reuters reported.

Lavrov made the demand during a phone call with Pompeo aimed at improving relations between the two countries, the Russian Foreign Ministry said, according to Reuters.

According to the outlet, the two diplomats also discussed ways to improve Russia-U.S. relations on “equal and mutually beneficial grounds,” including on issues such as Syria and the “challenges” of working toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Butina, a 29-year-old Russian citizen, was arrested last Sunday and charged with “conspiracy to act as an agent of the Russian Federation within the United States without prior notification to the Attorney General,” according to the Justice Department (DOJ).

“Butina worked at the direction of a high-level official in the Russian government who was previously a member of the legislature of the Russian Federation and later became a top official at the Russian Central Bank,” the DOJ alleges, adding that her purpose was “infiltrating organizations having influence in American politics, for the purpose of advancing the interests of the Russian Federation.”

She is being held in custody as a flight risk after appearing in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Monday.

Butina’s charges come days after Robert Mueller’s special counsel investigation indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers in the 2016 hacking of the Democratic National Committee.

On Monday, Trump appeared to side with Russia over his own intelligence agencies on the issue of Russia’s election interference in 2016, though he later sought to walk back the remarks.

How Many More Maria Butinas Are There? : NPR

By Philip Ewing

[NPR](#), July 21, 2018

This week in the Russia investigations: Two big questions about the second-most famous Russian in the world and Rod Rosenstein fires a warning shot. Finnish fallout

No Hollywood screenwriter could get away with turning in a treatment for this week. The studio bosses would roll their eyes and ask for the story to be more plausible.

And yet Americans — and the rest of the world — really did just live through five days in which the president of the United States publicly sided with the president of Russia against his own intelligence community, then denied that foreign interference threats continue, meanwhile holding open the possibility of making a former American diplomat available to Russian investigators who have traveled to the U.S. to pursue questionable criminal allegations leveled by Vladimir Putin.

The White House now says that what the president meant to say was the opposite of all that: He accepts the intelligence community’s verdicts and does not accept the idea of swapping persons of interest to both American and Russian inquisitors.

All that was playing out in the background as another big story in the Russia imbroglio unfurled over the week: the case of Maria Butina. The alleged infiltrator

A federal magistrate judge this week ordered that Butina must be jailed ahead of her trial on charges that she is a Russian agent, one tied to its FSB spy agency and one controlled from her first arrival as part of a deliberate influence campaign against the United States.

Longtime readers will remember the many questions about how “infiltration” might have fit in to the broader campaign of active measures waged by Moscow for several years against the U.S. and the West.

Now some of the answers are coming into focus, based on allegations in court documents filed in Butina’s case.

Butina has been traveling to the United States since 2015 and has been living in Washington, D.C., more or less full time on a student visa while enrolled at American University.

She has been making contacts all along with conservative political leaders and via the National Rifle Association and at least one religious organization. With the assistance of a few Americans, she has been making clear all along to people she met that she provides a channel back to Moscow, according to court documents.

Butina’s attorney argues that the government’s case is overblown. He also denies the charges against her and says the worst crime she has committed is convening a few dinners.

And for as much as the government has said about her in court documents, there are still wider questions about her case and the broader infiltration strategy.

How many more Butinas are there?

Court documents and other evidence unveiled by the government suggest how closely Butina was being controlled. In one FBI surveillance photograph, she is pictured with her fork and knife poised over dinner in a

bistro across from a man whose face has been obscured. The FBI says Butina was meeting with a diplomat from the Russian Embassy.

In another exhibit, handwritten notes describe a “Russian Patriots in Waiting organization”: What’s the green card process? How many Russian expatriates are in the U.S.? How to respond to the “offer of employment” from the spy agency FSB, successor to the old KGB?

Butina’s work on building a network appears to have been interrupted at an early stage. In fact, the government’s attorneys said she appeared to be preparing to leave Washington — and potentially the country — when she was arrested July 15.

How many other operatives like her are in the U.S.? There has been a suggestion all along about “infiltration” of a number of American political organizations. Butina has had a relatively high profile and been the subject of press reports for months, including by NPR’s Tim Mak. Are there other operatives like her who are still flying under the radar, and if so what are their assignments now?

Technically, the Justice Department has charged Butina with conspiring to act as an agent of a foreign government and acting as the agent of a foreign government without prior notification to the U.S. attorney general. There don’t appear to be any suggestions that she got access to any U.S. government or other secrets in the way that past suspects have in espionage cases. Her trial will likely be covered as a sensational spy case but, so far, it doesn’t appear to involve any spying — though we don’t know everything about what she was allegedly doing before her recent arrest.

The most famous antecedent of Butina’s case didn’t involve the theft of secrets either. A Russian official is quoted in court documents comparing her to Anna Chapman, who belonged to the group of so-called illegals rolled up by the FBI in 2010.

But Chapman and the other operatives in that case, run by Russia’s foreign intelligence service SVR, never actually got any secret information either, the FBI said.

Instead, they engaged in what the FBI called “spotting and assessing,” looking for targets of opportunity or people who might have been sympathetic. One goal was to “co-opt” them so they’d be useful if one day they took positions of power and influence.

Where might Butina have been engaged in this kind of reconnaissance work? Gun rights conventions, for one. The National Prayer Breakfast, for another. And among other venues, at South Carolina Republican Rep. Mark Sanford’s 2017 post-Thanksgiving barbecue, as CNN reported.

Counterintelligence investigators will be looking at all the contacts made in Butina’s case to assess how much influence already has been wrought — if any — and how much of this was the planting of seed corn that Moscow expected to reap later on. Rosenstein’s warning

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein is usually one of the more measured, if not taciturn, actors in the Russia saga, but he blasted into the Aspen Security Forum this week like a helicopter gunship.

Rosenstein warned about the ongoing danger of malign foreign influence — significant after the week’s back-and-forth involving Trump and Putin — and gave his audience a thumbnail history of active measures targeting the United States.

The Justice Department will do a better job of communicating about foreign interference, Rosenstein said, and he outlined the government’s strategy behind using indictments like the one against the 12 Russian intelligence officers as its tool of choice in combating cyberattacks.

Sometimes, there actually are times when the U.S. really can try defendants like those 12 Russians, Rosenstein said — people travel to cooperative countries and wind up in American custody after all. If the knowledge they might be arrested restricts someone who has been indicted from traveling, that also at least imposes a cost on cyber-miscreants.

Indictments also reveal to the public and their targets how much the United States knows about what has taken place, give “vindication” to victims and support other punitive measures, Rosenstein said.

The Treasury Department can use the information included in an indictment to impose sanctions, he said. Earlier this year, the U.S. sanctioned the Russians associated with the 2016 social media agitation campaign after they had been charged by Justice Department special counsel Robert Mueller.

Rosenstein may have had another audience in mind when he explained his strategy: his nemeses in the House Republican conference who have targeted him for possible contempt or even impeachment over their complaints that the Justice Department isn’t giving them the information they want.

Rosenstein says the department is complying with everything they request and, in the past, has said he won’t be bullied by allies of Trump who are trying to lean on him to help the president.

The overwhelming tone of Rosenstein’s message in Aspen was: This is not a game.

“I want to emphasize that covert propaganda disseminated by foreign adversaries is fundamentally different from domestic partisan wrangling,” he said. “As Sen. Margaret Chase Smith proclaimed in her 1950

declaration of conscience, we must address foreign national security threats 'patriotically as Americans,' and not 'politically as Republicans and Democrats.' "

Michael Cohen Secretly Taped Trump Discussing Payment To Playboy Model

By Matt Apuzzo, Maggie Haberman And Michael S. Schmidt

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump's longtime lawyer, Michael D. Cohen, secretly recorded a conversation with Mr. Trump two months before the presidential election in which they discussed payments to a former Playboy model who said she had an affair with Mr. Trump, according to lawyers and others familiar with the recording.

The F.B.I. seized the recording this year during a raid on Mr. Cohen's office. The Justice Department is investigating Mr. Cohen's involvement in paying women to tamp down embarrassing news stories about Mr. Trump ahead of the 2016 election. Prosecutors want to know whether that violated federal campaign finance laws, and any conversation with Mr. Trump about those payments would be of keen interest to them.

The recording's existence appears to undercut the Trump campaign's denial of any knowledge of payments to the model. And it further draws Mr. Trump into questions about tactics he and his associates used to keep aspects of his personal and business life a secret. And it highlights the potential legal and political danger that Mr. Cohen represents to Mr. Trump. Once the keeper of many of Mr. Trump's secrets, Mr. Cohen is now seen as increasingly willing to consider cooperating with prosecutors.

The former model, Karen McDougal, says she began a nearly yearlong affair with Mr. Trump in 2006, shortly after Mr. Trump's wife, Melania, gave birth to their son Barron. Ms. McDougal sold her story for \$150,000 to The National Enquirer, which was supportive of Mr. Trump, during the final months of the presidential campaign, but the tabloid sat on the story, which kept it from becoming public. The practice, known as "catch and kill," effectively silenced Ms. McDougal for the remainder of the campaign.

Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, confirmed in a telephone conversation on Friday that Mr. Trump had discussed payments to Ms. McDougal with Mr. Cohen in person on the recording. He said it was less than two minutes long, said Mr. Trump did not know he was being recorded and claimed that the president had done nothing wrong.

Mr. Giuliani said there was no indication on the tape that Mr. Trump knew before the conversation about the payment from the Enquirer's parent company, American Media Inc., to Ms. McDougal.

"Nothing in that conversation suggests that he had any knowledge of it in advance," Mr. Giuliani said. The recording cuts off, according to three people familiar with it, and it is not clear how the discussion ended.

Mr. Giuliani initially indicated the men discussed a payment from Mr. Trump to Ms. McDougal — separate from the Enquirer's payment — to buy her story. Later, he said that Mr. Trump and Mr. Cohen had actually discussed buying the rights to Ms. McDougal's story from the Enquirer, a move that would have effectively reimbursed the newspaper for its payments to her.

That payment was never made, Mr. Giuliani said, adding that Mr. Trump had told Mr. Cohen that if he were to make a payment related to Ms. McDougal, to write a check rather than send cash, so it could be properly documented.

Neither of Mr. Giuliani's descriptions of the conversations explains why, when The Wall Street Journal revealed the existence of the A.M.I. payment days before the election, Mr. Trump's campaign spokeswoman, Hope Hicks, said, "We have no knowledge of any of this." She said Ms. McDougal's claim of an affair was "totally untrue."

Mr. Cohen's lawyers discovered the recording as part of their review of the seized materials and shared it with Mr. Trump's lawyers, according to the three people briefed on the matter.

"Obviously, there is an ongoing investigation, and we are sensitive to that," Mr. Cohen's lawyer, Lanny J. Davis, said in a statement. "But suffice it to say that when the recording is heard, it will not hurt Mr. Cohen. Any attempt at spin cannot change what is on the tape."

Mr. Cohen rejected repeated requests for comment. Mr. Trump ignored shouted questions about it from reporters as he left the White House on Friday afternoon and departed for a weekend at his golf club in Bedminster, N.J.

David J. Pecker, the chairman of A.M.I., is a friend of Mr. Trump's, and Ms. McDougal has accused Mr. Cohen of secretly taking part in the deal — an allegation that is now part of the F.B.I. investigation.

"It can't be more than a minute and a half," Mr. Giuliani said, referring to the length of the conversation. "Twice someone walks in — someone brings soda in for them. It's not some secret conversation."

He added: "Neither one seems to be concerned anyone would hear it. It went off on irrelevant subjects that have nothing to do with this. It's a very professional

conversation between a client and a lawyer and the client saying, "Do it right."

Because the tape showed Mr. Trump learning about the A.M.I. payment, it actually helps Mr. Trump, Mr. Giuliani argued. "In the big scheme of things, it's powerful exculpatory evidence," he said. A person close to Mr. Cohen disputed that claim but would not elaborate.

The recording is potential evidence in the campaign finance investigation, but became tied up in a legal fight over what materials are protected by attorney-client privilege and thus off limits to prosecutors. It is not clear whether a federal judge has ruled on whether prosecutors can listen to the recording.

For a decade, Mr. Cohen served as one of Mr. Trump's most trusted fixers, aggressively taking on journalists, opposing lawyers and business adversaries. He frequently taped his conversations, unbeknown to the people with whom he was speaking. New York law allows one party to a conversation to tape conversations without the other knowing.

Mr. Cohen used to say he would take a bullet for Mr. Trump, but the relationship soured in the aftermath of the F.B.I. raids in April. In one conversation, Mr. Cohen's lawyers inquired whether Mr. Trump planned to pardon him, but Mr. Trump's lawyers gave no indication that the president would do so, according to two people familiar with the discussion.

Mr. Cohen has publicly and privately discussed the idea of cooperating with the F.B.I. In an interview with ABC News this month, Mr. Cohen seemed to be openly inviting prosecutors to talk to him.

"My wife, my daughter and my son have my first loyalty and always will," Mr. Cohen said. "I put family and country first." The words got Mr. Trump's attention, and he asked people if they thought Mr. Cohen was trying to send a message, either to him or the Justice Department.

The Cohen investigation began with the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, who is investigating the Trump campaign's links to Russia. But as the Cohen case became increasingly focused on Mr. Cohen's personal business dealings and his campaign activities unrelated to Russia, Mr. Mueller referred it to federal prosecutors in Manhattan, who are now leading the investigation.

The wide-ranging search warrants served on Mr. Cohen this spring show that prosecutors are investigating Mr. Cohen's involvement in payments to silence women about their relationships with Mr. Trump. In addition to Ms. McDougal's arrangement, prosecutors also sought evidence of payments to the adult film star

Stephanie Clifford, who is better known as Stormy Daniels.

Mr. Trump has denied knowing about those payments, though people familiar with the arrangement have said he was aware of them. But his denial helped suppress public allegations of an affair during the final months of the campaign.

Such payments, depending on how and why they were made, could represent campaign finance violations — a case that harks back to the failed prosecution of the former Democratic senator John Edwards, who tried to hide a pregnant mistress during his presidential campaign.

Mr. Cohen's case is unusual because the payment to Ms. McDougal was made by American Media Inc. In August 2016, A.M.I. bought the rights to her story about Mr. Trump for \$150,000 and a commitment to use its magazines to promote her career as a fitness specialist.

Federal agents are also scrutinizing Mr. Cohen's personal financial dealings and whether he committed fraud by lying about his assets on bank forms. In particular, the authorities are scrutinizing taxi medallions that Mr. Cohen owned, and whether he accurately accounted for their value, according to several people close to the case.

Matt Apuzzo and Michael S. Schmidt reported from Washington, and Maggie Haberman from New York.

Trump Signals Consequences For Michael Cohen Over Secret Recording

By Katie Rogers And Maggie Haberman
[New York Times](#), July 21, 2018

BERKELEY HEIGHTS, N.J. — President Trump lashed out at his longtime lawyer, Michael D. Cohen, on Saturday, suggesting that there could be legal consequences for Mr. Cohen's decision to record a discussion they had two months before the 2016 election about paying a former Playboy model who said she had an affair with Mr. Trump.

"Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) — almost unheard of," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. "Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client — totally unheard of & perhaps illegal. The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!"

With his tweet, the latest in a week of dizzying statements by a president whose advisers say has become more unwilling than ever to listen to advice, Mr. Trump signaled open warfare on Mr. Cohen, a longtime fixer he had until now tried to keep by his side. The Justice Department is investigating Mr. Cohen's involvement in paying women to quash potentially

damaging news coverage about Mr. Trump during the campaign.

The investigation into Mr. Cohen, the onetime keeper of Mr. Trump's personal and business secrets, remains a source of deep concern for the president's lawyers, and in recent months, Mr. Trump has offered public messages encouraging Mr. Cohen to stay loyal to him.

In late April, the president said on Twitter that "I have always liked & respected" Mr. Cohen, and that while "most people will flip if the Government" spares them punishment, "I don't see Michael doing that." But this month, Mr. Cohen suggested that he was looking seriously at cooperating with prosecutors, telling ABC News that he would "put family and country first."

While the president suggested on Saturday that Mr. Cohen's recording may have been illegal, New York law allows one party to a conversation to tape it without the other knowing. Over the years, Mr. Cohen, in his dealings on Mr. Trump's behalf with journalists, opposing lawyers and business adversaries, frequently taped his conversations, unbeknown to the people with whom he was speaking. Mr. Trump himself also has a history of recording phone calls and conversations.

After learning about the tape, The New York Times approached Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, Rudolph W. Giuliani. A person familiar with the discussions said that once The Times approached Mr. Giuliani, the president's legal team chose not to assert attorney-client privilege over the recording.

In going after his longtime associate, Mr. Trump, who left Washington on Friday to spend the weekend at his Bedminster, N.J., golf course, added another chaotic twist to a head-spinning week that began with a widely condemned news conference with Vladimir V. Putin, the Russian president, in Helsinki, Finland. It was also another example of how the president tries to barrel forward into another news cycle after a spate of unflattering news coverage.

But at the same time, Mr. Trump's largely unconvincing efforts to repair the damage by asserting that he in fact accepts that Russia interfered in the election — and the inability of his aides to persuade the president to make a decisive pivot on the issue — has kept the news from Helsinki front and center.

The frantic conversations over what to do began on the flight home. While the president groused about the difficulty of the questions posed to him by American journalists, John R. Bolton, the national security adviser, mostly stayed away from Mr. Trump.

Mr. Bolton wrote down four bullet points aboard Air Force One that he believed were relevant, including that Mr. Trump should acknowledge that he believed the

intelligence agencies' findings on the Russian meddling. He relayed them to the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, although it was unclear whether the suggestions were delivered to the president.

On the plane, Mr. Trump's mood vacillated from snappish to upbeat. He asked advisers once again about the Democratic National Committee server that was hacked (he had raised the server issue while standing next to Mr. Putin), and why cyberintruders had not penetrated Republican National Committee systems.

In the days since arriving back home, Mr. Trump has surveyed almost everyone he has talked to about his performance in Finland, but few told him just how poorly it had gone. Aides suggested different options for "changing the narrative," without seeming to realize that a simple story would not suffice.

Mr. Trump ultimately came up with his own solution: He would say he had left out a word in the news conference with Mr. Putin. "The sentence should have been, 'I don't see any reason why it wouldn't be Russia,'" Mr. Trump said on Tuesday, trying to clear up the confusion but heaping on more. "Sort of a double negative."

When it was clear that the news cycle had not jumped ahead, Mr. Trump's daughter Ivanka looked for ways to push the narrative away from Russia. On Thursday morning, at a senior staff meeting, Ms. Trump, a senior adviser to the president, told the group that she wanted help keeping her father on message, according to a person briefed on what took place. She said her worker retraining announcement with her father later in the afternoon at the White House could provide a pivot toward a new story.

Once she finished talking, the president's counselor, Kellyanne Conway, pointed out that Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, and two other administration intelligence officials would appear at a national security conference in Aspen, Colo., noting that it could become another day of coverage about Russia. John F. Kelly, the chief of staff, resumed the meeting without addressing the issue. No one else suggested a plan of attack either.

Later that day, the spotlight on Russia only intensified as Mr. Trump invited Mr. Putin to Washington. The move caught Mr. Coats by surprise as he answered questions onstage in Aspen.

By Saturday, the president tried to move the focus away from his dealings with Russia by targeting Mr. Cohen. But in doing so, he shifted the story back to another matter nagging his presidency: accusations by women that Mr. Trump's lawyers had paid them for their silence in the wake of extramarital affairs before he was elected president.

The president's aides have had little to say about those payments. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday. In the past, though, the president's aides have called the account of the affair by the former model, Karen McDougal, "an old story that is just more fake news," and have denied that the president was involved.

In response to the president's tweet on Saturday, Lanny J. Davis, Mr. Cohen's lawyer, who formerly served in the Clinton White House, hit back at Mr. Trump and Mr. Giuliani. Their legal strategy was "flawed," he said, addressing a comment by Mr. Giuliani that the recording could ultimately clear the president of wrongdoing.

"The strategy of @realdonaldtrump @potus @RudyGiuliani is flawed; just as is #Trump's false #Twitter statement made against @michaelcohen212 this morning. Rudy claims the tape is "exculpatory". Why so angry?" Mr. Davis wrote.

The recording is sure to raise new questions about what the president knew about the payments and when.

Ms. McDougal says she began a nearly yearlong affair with Mr. Trump in 2006, shortly after Mr. Trump's wife, Melania, gave birth to their son Barron. Ms. McDougal sold her story for \$150,000 to The National Enquirer, which was supportive of Mr. Trump, during the final months of the presidential campaign. But the tabloid sat on the story, which kept it from becoming public. The practice, known as "catch and kill," effectively silenced Ms. McDougal for the remainder of the campaign.

On the recording, Mr. Trump and Mr. Cohen were discussing what would essentially have been a reimbursement to American Media Inc., or A.M.I., the parent company of The Enquirer, whose chairman, David J. Pecker, is friendly with the president. The recording was found during an F.B.I. raid on Mr. Cohen's office this year.

When The Wall Street Journal reported on A.M.I.'s payments to Ms. McDougal days before the election, the Trump campaign denied knowing about them. "We have no knowledge of any of this," Hope Hicks, the campaign spokeswoman, said at the time, adding that Ms. McDougal's claim of an affair was "totally untrue."

Privately, Mr. Trump's advisers have suggested that Mr. Cohen had done things that Mr. Trump was unaware of. The recording makes that harder to accept.

On his way to the New Jersey golf club, the president ignored several questions from reporters about why his campaign would have denied knowledge of the payments if he was on tape discussing them with Mr. Cohen.

Katie Rogers reported from Berkeley Heights, N.J., and Maggie Haberman from New York.

'Your Favorite President Did Nothing Wrong': Trump Lashes Out At Secret Cohen Recording

By Felicia Sonmez

[Washington Post](#), July 21, 2018

BERKELEY HEIGHTS, N.J. — President Trump on Saturday vented about a secret recording taped by his former attorney and seized by the FBI, calling both actions "inconceivable" and maintaining that he did nothing wrong.

In a morning tweet from his golf course in Bedminster, N.J., Trump said that it was "Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) — almost unheard of."

"Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client — totally unheard of & perhaps illegal," Trump added. "The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!"

Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) — almost unheard of. Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client — totally unheard of & perhaps illegal. The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 21, 2018

New York is a "one-party consent" state, meaning that in general, it is legal to record a conversation as long as at least one party agrees, even if that person is the one doing the recording. In addition, Trump's attorneys have not claimed the recording is a privileged attorney-client conversation, a person familiar with the investigation told The Washington Post on Friday.

The "break into" phrase referenced by Trump was actually the raiding by FBI agents in April of the Manhattan office and residences of Trump's then-personal attorney, Michael Cohen, who is being investigated for potential bank and election-law crimes. The raid, conducted under a search warrant, was aimed at seizing records related to two women who received payments in the run-up to the 2016 election after they alleged extramarital affairs with Trump, among other documents.

In an interview this month with ABC News, Cohen himself described the FBI agents who conducted the raid as "respectful, courteous and professional" and said he thanked them and shook hands with them as they left.

"I don't agree with those who demonize or vilify the FBI," Cohen told ABC's George Stephanopoulos. "I respect the FBI as an institution, as well as their agents."

On Friday, three people with knowledge of the conversation told The Post that Cohen had secretly taped a conversation with Trump in September 2016

about whether to purchase the rights to the story of one of those women, Playboy centerfold Karen McDougal.

The recording was among the records seized in the FBI raid, multiple people familiar with the probe said.

[In secret recording, Trump and Cohen discuss buying rights to model's account of alleged affair]

One month before the conversation, AMI, the parent company of the National Enquirer, bought the rights to McDougal's story for \$150,000, then shelved it. Trump's attorney Rudolph W. Giuliani said in a statement Friday that the recording is "powerful exculpatory evidence," because it does not contain anything suggesting that Trump knew about that payment in advance.

But the recording does show that Trump was considering buying the rights to McDougal's story from AMI — despite the fact that Trump's spokeswoman at the time, Hope Hicks, called McDougal's claims "totally untrue" and said Trump had "no knowledge of any of this."

Cohen's lawyer, Lanny Davis, fired back at Trump with a tweet later Saturday morning, saying the president's statement against Cohen was false and mocking the Trump legal team's strategy as "flawed."

"Rudy claims the tape is 'exculpatory,'" Davis said, referring to Giuliani. "Why so angry?"

Carol D. Leonnig and Rosalind S. Helderman contributed to this report.

Trump Attorneys Waive Privilege On Secret Recording About Ex-Playmate Payment

By Gloria Borger, Erica Orden And Dana Bash And Evan Perez

[CNN](#), July 21, 2018

(CNN)President Donald Trump's lawyers have waived attorney-client privilege on his behalf regarding a secretly recorded conversation he had in September 2016 with his former longtime lawyer Michael Cohen in which they discussed payments to an ex-Playboy model who says she had an affair with the President, according to sources familiar with the matter.

The move comes as an attorney for Cohen openly questioned Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani's claim that the tape showed no wrongdoing by the President, furthering the growing divide between Trump and Cohen, who had once said he'd take a bullet for the President.

Trump's lawyers asking on behalf of the President to remove the privilege designation from the recording means that the government now has access to it as part of the US attorney for the Southern District of New York's probe into Cohen. It effectively gives prosecutors the

ability to use the recording if they find it relevant to their criminal investigation of Cohen.

The prosecutors working on the case had not reviewed the recording because it, along with millions of other documents and files seized in FBI searches of Cohen's home, hotel room and office in April, was undergoing the special master process, in which an independent party reviews whether the items should be regarded as privileged and thus withheld from prosecutors. The special master had designated the recording as privileged, according to two sources familiar with the process, but Trump's lawyers subsequently waived their right to maintain that designation.

After The New York Times first revealed the existence of the tape — and Giuliani claimed the tape was exculpatory evidence that did no harm to Trump — his legal team decided to remove any protection relating to the attorney-client relationship on this specific matter.

The President's attorneys clearly believe that the tape will not show any wrongdoing by their client. The transaction never happened, Giuliani told CNN.

But Giuliani's claims that the tape does Trump no damage was disputed by a source close to Cohen who said that Giuliani is "trying to say what is bad is good." Later Lanny Davis, Cohen's newest attorney, put out a statement claiming that "when the recording is heard, it will not hurt Michael Cohen. Any attempt at spin cannot change what is on the tape."

Team Cohen remains surprised that Trump's lawyers removed the protective claim of privilege, given their view that the tape is harmful to the President. They claim that Giuliani is mischaracterizing the tape in key ways that contradict the facts of the conversation as they see them. But they declined to offer a description of their exact view of the conversation beyond saying that Giuliani's more benign descriptions of the tape are contradictory to what actually occurred.

What's more, they see Giuliani's public comments as a way to change the subject from the President's near-universally panned performance in Helsinki, Finland, at the beginning of last week.

Giuliani put a positive spin on the content of the in-person conversation on Friday, describing it as Trump discussing potential payments to former Playboy model Karen McDougal, who alleges Trump an affair with her. Trump denies the allegation.

"Cohen is talking about buying the rights from AMI (American Media Inc.)," Giuliani told CNN on Friday. "They're talking about a corporation doing it, one of their corporations doing it. The President says 'make sure it's done correctly, and make sure it's done by check.'"

Giuliani's point is that Trump did nothing wrong — that before the conversation he knew nothing about any

payments, noting that no payment was made and that he suggested paying by cash so there would be a record of it.

The President's lawyer also sought to position the President as wronged by the recording. Trump was stunned to hear about the tape, Giuliani said, and, according to a source familiar with the matter, responded when informed of its existence that "I can't believe Michael would do this to me." Giuliani said the recording is short—less than two minutes, according to another source – and was simply a professional exchange between a client and his lawyer.

That was echoed Saturday by the President, who tweeted that it was "inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client – totally unheard of & perhaps illegal. The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!"

In response, Cohen attorney Davis tweeted, "The strategy of @realdonaldtrump @potus @RudyGiuliani is flawed; just as is #Trump's false #Twitter statement made against @michaelcohen212 this morning. Rudy claims the tape is "exculpatory". Why so angry?"

Asked about the Davis tweet, Giuliani told CNN on Saturday: "How would you feel if your lawyer was recording you without telling you? The tweet is straightforward and correct."

One of the sources familiar with the matter pointed out that New York is a "one-party" consent state, meaning that as long as one participant in the conversation gives permission to record, it is legal.

"Taping a conversation is the functional equivalent of retaining notes," the source said.

The source added that the recording and any lawyer's notes are privileged and non-public and called it ironic that Trump would complain about the recording and yet also choose to release it.

"It is the client who owns the privilege and not the lawyer," the source said. "In this specific instance, it was Trump who waived the privilege after Special Master Jones ruled the tape was privileged. Team Trump actually contacted the judge and waived the privilege, thus, permitting Rudy (Giuliani) the ability to release his version of the tape's content. It is ironic that Trump would complain about a privileged tape that would not have been released and then chooses to make it public himself. Very foolish strategy by team Trump."

When the existence of the apparent deal with AMI was first reported by The Wall Street Journal just days before the election, the campaign said that the President was unaware of anything relating to a McDougal payoff, and Hope Hicks—then a spokeswoman—denied that Trump even had an affair with McDougal. But the recording, made two months earlier, suggests otherwise.

In addition, Giuliani has said there is only one real conversation with the President and the rest are non-substantive, short, more mundane conversations about ministerial matters, like setting up discussions.

But one source close to Cohen, without specifying any conversation or naming Trump himself, says there are "definitely all kinds of tapes out there." Two other sources said that beyond the tape with the President there were other recordings of "powerful" people speaking with Cohen that the FBI seized.

At this point, Cohen has not has any conversations with prosecutors in the Southern District of New York, one source says. But lately Cohen has gone out of his way to distance himself from the President, tweeting shade about the president's Helsinki performance. In a CNN story earlier this month, a source close to Cohen indicated that "the truth is not you or your client's friend." The source also said that Cohen "is no longer taking a bullet for you (Trump), is no longer a flunky," calling his declaration of independence "his July 4th moment."

CNN's Jim Acosta, Evan Perez and Kara Scannell contributed to this report.

This story has been updated to clarify that the waiving of privilege was on behalf of the President.

Trump Slams Cohen For 'Perhaps Illegal' Recording

The president also criticized the FBI's April raid on his longtime lawyer's office and residence.

By Quint Forgey

[Politico](#), July 21, 2018

President Donald Trump on Saturday bashed his longtime lawyer, Michael Cohen, for secretly recording their conversation about payments to a former Playboy model two months before the 2016 election.

But he also criticized the April FBI raid on Cohen's office and residence that led to law enforcement officials' seizure of the tape.

"Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) – almost unheard of," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client – totally unheard of & perhaps illegal. The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!"

A lawyer taping a client is not illegal in New York, which has a "one-party consent" law.

While the tape, as well as a lawyer's notes, are privileged and non-public, a source familiar with Cohen's legal strategy said, "it is the client who owns the privilege and not the lawyer. In this specific instance, it was Trump who waived the privilege after Special Master [Barbara] Jones ruled the tape was privileged. Team Trump

actually contacted the judge and waived the privilege, thus, permitting Rudy [Giuliani] the ability to release his version of the tape's content. It is ironic that Trump would complain about a privileged tape that would not have been released and then chooses to make it public himself."

Giuliani, Trump's personal attorney, told The New York Times on Friday that Cohen had made the recording, but maintained the payment Cohen and Trump discussed was never made, and Trump had no prior knowledge of it.

"Nothing in that conversation suggests that he had any knowledge of it in advance," Giuliani told the Times. "In the big scheme of things, it's powerful exculpatory evidence."

Cohen's lawyer, Lanny Davis, confirmed Friday on Twitter that the tape existed, writing: "Obviously, there is an ongoing investigation, and we are sensitive to that. But suffice it to say that when the recording is heard, it will not hurt @MichaelCohen212. Any attempt at spin can not change what is on the tape."

The president is spending the weekend at his Bedminster golf club in New Jersey. He's scheduled to return to the White House on Sunday.

Trump Finds It 'Inconceivable' Lawyer Would Tape A Client

By Zeke Miller

[Associated Press](#), July 21, 2018

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — Donald Trump said Saturday he finds it "inconceivable" that a lawyer would tape a client, as the president weighed in after the disclosure that in the weeks before the 2016 election, his then-personal attorney secretly recorded their discussion about a potential payment for a former Playboy model's account of having an affair with Trump.

The recording was part of a large collection of documents and electronic records seized earlier this year by federal authorities from Michael Cohen, the longtime Trump fixer.

In a tweet, Trump called such taping "totally unheard of & perhaps illegal." He also asserted, without elaborating, in post: "The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!"

Cohen had made a practice of recording conversations, unbeknownst to those he was speaking with. Most states, including New York, allow for recordings of conversations with only the consent of one party; other states require all parties to agree to a recording or have mixed laws on the matter. It was not immediately clear where Trump and Cohen were located at the time of the call.

Cohen's recording adds to questions about whether Trump tried to quash damaging stories before the election. Trump's campaign had said it knew nothing about any payment to ex-centerfold Karen McDougal.

Transparency groups and Democrats have argued that the secret efforts to silence Trump accusers, including a payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels, should be investigated by the Federal Election Commission as potential violations of campaign finance laws, which require disclosure of campaign expenditures. Trump's attorneys have argued that any payments to accusers would have been made regardless of his presidential candidacy, and that no violation occurred.

The recording could also further entangle the president in a criminal investigation that for months has targeted Cohen.

The erstwhile Trump loyalist has hired a new attorney, Clinton White House veteran Lanny Davis, and disassociated himself from the president as both remain under investigation. Cohen has not been charged with a crime.

Current Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani said the payment was never made and the brief recording shows Trump did nothing wrong.

"The transaction that Michael is talking about on the tape never took place, but what's important is: If it did take place, the president said it has to be done correctly and it has to be done by check" to keep a proper record of it, Giuliani said.

Davis said "any attempt at spin cannot change what is on the tape."

"When the recording is heard, it will not hurt Mr. Cohen," Davis said in a statement.

The recording was first reported Friday by The New York Times.

The FBI raided Cohen's office, home and hotel room in April, searching in part for information about payments to McDougal and porn actress Stormy Daniels, who received a \$130,000 payment from Cohen before the election to keep quiet about a sexual relationship she says she had with Trump. The FBI investigation is separate from special counsel Robert Mueller's probe of election interference in 2016 and potential obstruction of justice by those in the president's orbit.

Referring to that raid, Trump called it "inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) — almost unheard of. Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client." In past comments Trump has also referred to the court-ordered seizure as a "break-in," though Cohen has

been more sanguine, saying the FBI agents were courteous and respectful.

A self-described fixer for Trump for more than a decade, Cohen said last year he would “take a bullet” for Trump. But he told ABC News in an interview broadcast this month that he now puts “family and country first” and won’t let anyone paint him as “a villain of this story.” On Twitter, he scrubbed mentions and photos of Trump from a profile that previously identified him as “Personal attorney to President Donald J. Trump.”

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker in Washington, Jennifer Peltz and Jake Pearson in New York and Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

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Trump Denies Wrongdoing, Says Lawyer’s Tape ‘Perhaps Illegal’

By David Brunnstrom, Karen Freifeld
[Reuters](#), July 21, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

‘Perhaps Illegal’: Trump Rails Against Cohen For Taping His Private Conversations

By Chris White
[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

President Donald Trump blasted the federal government and one of his former attorneys Saturday morning for using “perhaps illegal” means to delegitimize his presidency.

“Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer’s office (early in the morning) – almost unheard of. Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client – totally unheard of & perhaps illegal,” Trump wrote in a tweet.

He added: “The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!” Trump was referring to reports showing the FBI seizing a recording of Trump speaking with his then-attorney Michael Cohen discussing a potential payoff to a Playboy model who alleges an affair with the president.

The recording is said to be approximately two minutes in which Cohen and Trump discuss the Playboy model’s allegation that she had a nearly year-long affair with the president in 2006. (RELATED: FBI Reportedly

Has ‘Tape’ Of Trump Talking Playboy Model Payoff With Cohen)

The tape of the recording between Trump and Cohen was taken two months before the 2016 presidential election. The tape was seized when the U.S. Southern District of New York raided Cohen’s offices after possible criminal information was referred by special counsel Robert Mueller.

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Trump Makes Most Pointed Criticism Yet Of Attorney Michael Cohen

President Trump, in a tweet, said his longtime personal attorney’s tape of them talking about buying rights to claims of an affair was ‘perhaps illegal’

By Michael C. Bender
[Wall Street Journal](#), July 21, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

In Secret Recording Seized By FBI, Trump And Cohen Discuss Making Payments For Story Of Model Who Alleged Affair With Trump

By Carol D. Leonnig And Rosalind S. Helderman
[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

Federal investigators have an audio recording in which then-presidential candidate Donald Trump and his personal attorney Michael Cohen discussed in September 2016 making payments for the story of Playboy centerfold Karen McDougal, who allegedly had an extramarital affair with Trump, according to two people familiar with the conversation.

The recording, made by Cohen, was seized by federal agents now investigating Trump’s longtime confidant for potential bank and campaign finance crimes, according to multiple people familiar with the probe.

In a statement Friday, President Trump’s attorney Rudolph W. Giuliani confirmed the recording’s existence and said no payment was ever made. The New York Times first reported the existence of the recording.

Trump and Cohen discussed the possible payment after AMI, the parent company of the National Enquirer, bought the rights to McDougal’s story for \$150,000 in August 2016, then sat on it.

"Nothing in that conversation suggests that he had any knowledge of [the AMI payment] in advance," Giuliani said. "In the big scheme of things, it's powerful exculpatory evidence."

But the recording shows that Trump — whose spokeswoman denied he had any knowledge of the AMI deal with McDougal when it became public days before the election — in fact knew of her claims and efforts to keep her quiet at least two months earlier.

Lanny Davis, an attorney for Cohen, declined to comment.

On Friday, McDougal's lawyer Carol Heller wrote on Twitter that she was "learning of this in real time just like everyone else." She declined to comment further. Peter Stris, a lawyer who negotiated McDougal's settlement with AMI earlier this year, tweeted, "When @realDonaldTrump said we were lying, do you think he meant we WEREN'T?"

The revelation of the recording comes as Cohen has signaled that he might be willing to cooperate with the federal investigation into his business dealings, a probe that has examined his interactions with AMI and a hush-money payment he arranged with adult-film actress Stormy Daniels, who also claimed to have had a sexual encounter with Trump. An April raid of Cohen's residences and office sought records related to both McDougal and Cohen.

Cohen, who served for a decade as a lawyer at the Trump Organization, was known to sometimes tape conversations with associates, store them digitally and then replay them for colleagues, as The Washington Post reported in April.

In the September 2016 conversation, Cohen and Trump were discussing a plan by Cohen to attempt to purchase the rights to McDougal's story from AMI for roughly \$150,000, according to one person familiar with recording.

Trump can be heard urging Cohen to make sure he properly documents the agreement to buy the rights and urges him to use a check — rather than cash — to keep a record of the transaction, the person said.

It is unclear why Cohen and Trump sought to purchase the story from AMI and then did not complete the transaction.

The Wall Street Journal first reported four days before the November 2016 election that McDougal had been paid by the National Enquirer. At the time, Trump's campaign spokeswoman Hope Hicks called McDougal's claims "totally untrue."

"We have no knowledge of any of this," she said.

Earlier this year, in an interview with CNN, McDougal detailed what she said was a 10-month affair

she had with Trump in 2006 and 2007, beginning in the year after Trump married Melania.

The former Playboy model said that after their first sexual encounter, Trump tried to offer her money. She turned down the offer and began a relationship that included, she said, interactions between the two "many dozens of times."

In August 2016, AMI, the parent company of the National Enquirer, paid McDougal \$150,000 for the right to her story but never published an article based on her account. But the agreement meant that McDougal signed a non-disclosure agreement that prevented her from revealing the affair.

She filed a lawsuit against AMI this year seeking to regain the rights to her story and settled with the company in April.

In her lawsuit against AMI, McDougal said she was happy when AMI bought her story but did not publish it, because she was not anxious for publicity. But she said her opinion changed this year when she learned new details about the deal, including that her lawyer at the time and AMI had both been in contact with Cohen while her deal was being negotiated.

Beth Reinhard contributed to this report.

Michael Cohen Taped Conversation With Trump About Buying Rights To Playmate's Story

Conversation occurred in September 2016, after American Media Inc. had purchased Karen McDougal's story that she had affair with Trump

By Rebecca Ballhaus, Michael Rothfeld And Joe Palazzolo

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 20, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump Was Taped Talking Of Paying For Playboy Model's Story

By Eric Tucker And Jennifer Peltz

[Associated Press](#), July 20, 2018

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer secretly recorded Trump discussing a potential payment for a former Playboy model's account of having an affair with him, people familiar with an investigation into the attorney said Friday.

The payment was never made, according to Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, who said the recording shows Trump did nothing wrong.

Former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen surreptitiously made the recording two months before

Trump's 2016 election, according to a person familiar with a federal investigation into Cohen that brought the tape to light. The FBI now has it, according to the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing inquiry.

The conversation between Trump and Cohen came weeks after the National Enquirer's parent company reached a \$150,000 deal to pay ex-Playmate Karen McDougal for her story of a 2006 affair, which it never published — a tabloid practice known as “catch and kill.” Trump denies the affair ever happened.

The company, American Media Inc., is run by Trump friend and supporter David Pecker.

The company's payment effectively silenced McDougal through the election, though days beforehand, news of the deal emerged in The Wall Street Journal. At the time, a Trump spokeswoman said his campaign had “no knowledge of any of this.”

But in the recorded conversation, he and Cohen had discussed buying the rights to McDougal's story from the Enquirer, according to the person familiar with the investigation.

Giuliani said the conversation between the two men was very brief.

“The transaction that Michael is talking about on the tape never took place, but what's important is: If it did take place, the president said it has to be done correctly and it has to be done by check” to keep a proper record of it, Giuliani told the AP.

Cohen, his lawyers and McDougal's lawyer didn't immediately respond to messages. Cohen lawyer Lanny Davis declined to comment to The New York Times, which first reported on the recording.

The FBI raided Cohen's office, home and hotel room in April amid an investigation into his business dealings, including any information on payments to McDougal.

The Enquirer's payment to the former centerfold gave the tabloid the exclusive rights to any story she might ever wish to tell about having an affair with a married man.

She later publicly alleged that the Enquirer had tricked her into accepting the deal and had threatened to ruin her if she broke it. After she sued the tabloid seeking to invalidate the contract in March, the Enquirer agreed to allow her to tell her story.

Cohen, a self-described fixer for Trump for more than a decade, said last year that he “would take a bullet” for Trump. But Cohen told an interviewer earlier this month that he now puts “family and country first” and won't let anyone paint him as “a villain of this story.”

Hours before the Times published its story, Cohen met in New York Friday morning with the Rev. Al Sharpton, a frequent critic of Trump.

Cohen and Sharpton said in tweets they have known each other for 20 years. Cohen contacted the civil rights activist in recent weeks, longtime Sharpton spokeswoman Rachel Noerdlinger said.

She said the two revisited conversations they'd had over the years when Cohen was Sharpton's conduit to Trump during clashes over race issues and over Trump's years of questioning the authenticity of former President Barack Obama's birth certificate.

Cohen tweeted there's “no one better to talk to!” than Sharpton, who used his own Twitter account to advise readers: “Stay tuned.”

Tucker reported from Washington.

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Trump Discussing A Hush Agreement Related To A Playboy Model Raises A New Set Of Legal Questions

By Philip Bump

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

It's probably easiest to start with a timeline.

In August 2016, former Playboy model Karen McDougal reached a deal with American Media Inc., the publishers of the National Enquirer and other magazines. As part of that deal, Ronan Farrow reported for the New Yorker, she would get \$150,000 and several opportunities to write for AMI publications. In exchange, AMI got the exclusive rights to stories about any relationship, physical or romantic, with any “then-married man.”

The specific “then-married man” with whom McDougal had a relationship was a very good friend of AMI boss David Pecker: then-presidential candidate Donald Trump.

The deal was the result of months of conversations with AMI, brokered on McDougal's end by her attorney, Keith Davidson. A few months later, Davidson negotiated another deal to bury another story about a relationship with Trump, that of adult film actress Stormy Daniels. For the Daniels agreement, Davidson worked with Trump's longtime personal attorney Michael Cohen.

At some point — it's not clear when — Davidson and Cohen also discussed McDougal's settlement, according to a conversation she had with CNN's Anderson Cooper in March.

"Do you think Donald Trump would have been aware of this — of this deal?" Cooper asked. "That [AMI was] doing him — that they were allegedly doing him this favor?"

"I wouldn't know, but based on what I'm learning as we're all learning together as we read, and one of the big complaints with why I think my contract is illegal is because his attorney was talking to my attorney," McDougal replied.

"You're saying Donald Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen, was talking to Keith Davidson, your attorney," Cooper clarified.

"Correct," she said, "without me even knowing, without my knowledge."

"Theoretically, there would be no reason for Michael Cohen to be having communication with your attorney because this was a deal between Keith Davidson, you, and AMI," Cooper said.

"Right," McDougal replied. "So, why was he involved in my deal? And why wasn't I told that he was involved in my deal?"

On Friday, the New York Times first reported the existence of an audio recording between Cohen and Trump discussing that AMI agreement. That conversation apparently happened in late September, after the Aug. 5, 2016, signing of the agreement and, The Post reported, focused on potentially buying the rights to the story from the publisher.

Former New York mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, who now works on Trump's legal team, said that no payment from Trump was made, but that the conversation included ensuring that any payment to AMI be done with a check so that it could be documented.

All of this is interesting for several reasons. The first is simply that the existence of a conversation between Trump and Cohen about McDougal strengthens her assertion that she and the president had an affair more than a decade ago. The second is that the discussion itself, apparently about trying to keep private that relationship, suggests that Trump was keenly aware of the political damage such a revelation might do, even before the slew of allegations that emerged after The Post reported on the existence of the "Access Hollywood" tape.

The least titillating but perhaps most important reason is the third: whether campaign finance laws might have been broken.

We've been over this before, so a quick summary is in order. Cohen couldn't simply spend money to keep someone quiet out of concern that their story would affect the election. Given Cohen's relationship with the candidate and his role as an agent of the campaign (attending rallies, speaking on its behalf on television,

etc.), the money he paid to Daniels would have needed to be reported if it were meant to influence the election.

We know or believe that:

AMI paid McDougal for the rights to her story in August 2016.

Cohen and Davidson likely spoke at some point.

Trump and Cohen discussed buying the rights from AMI in September.

They ended up not doing so.

There are three important questions for which we don't have answers.

Why did AMI make the deal with McDougal?

How did Cohen and Trump learn about it?

Why didn't they then buy the rights themselves?

It's possible, as we've explored before, that AMI and Trump's friend Pecker bought the rights specifically to aid the campaign by not letting the story get out before the election. That's a benefit to the Trump campaign — but not in the legal sense. Pecker could spend that money as he desired. With a caveat: If Trump or Cohen had spoken with AMI before the company bought the rights to McDougal's story, the legal line would likely have been crossed.

To answer the second question, it's also possible that Trump and Cohen never had a conversation with AMI about the possible purchase. Somehow they learned that AMI had made this deal, clearly, but it could have been through Cohen's conversations with Davidson, mentioned in that CNN interview by McDougal. Maybe they became aware of the deal and discussed buying the rights for themselves.

But that brings us to the third question, the most important one. Why didn't they then buy the rights?

It seems clear that Trump and Cohen were hoping to keep negative stories from coming to light in the months before the election. They may have been worried that AMI might decide at some point before the election that McDougal's story could sell a lot of magazines. AMI never did that, though, even though Trump never bought the rights that would have kept them from doing so.

So did AMI or Pecker assure Trump they didn't intend to run the story?

If so, that's likely a violation of law, former Federal Election Commission lead counsel Lawrence Noble said when we spoke by phone on Friday. The \$150,000 spent by AMI to buy the story from McDougal would likely be considered an in-kind contribution to the Trump campaign that wasn't reported.

"If one of the options was buying it from AMI and AMI convinced them they didn't need to buy it, that bolsters the argument that it's a campaign contribution because that would be a discussion with AMI about it,"

Noble said. There are ways in which media outlets can engage in political activity, he said, but this likely wouldn't count. A conversation in which AMI assured Cohen and Trump that the story would be buried "would be strong evidence that AMI made a campaign contribution," he said. "That this wasn't a journalistic decision, that this was in coordination with the campaign."

That holds even if AMI paid McDougal without Trump or Cohen's knowledge, and it holds if Trump and Cohen convinced AMI to sit on the story.

Giuliani called the taped conversation "exculpatory" in his conversation with the Times. Perhaps in the sense that it contributes to Trump's argument that he didn't pay off McDougal or have a hand in the initial outreach from AMI to McDougal.

But it's not at all exculpatory for AMI — at least until we learn more about the seemingly numerous pre-Election Day conversations about paying money to women who claim to have had affairs with Donald Trump.

Tabloid Company, Aiding Trump Campaign, May Have Crossed Line Into Politics

By Jim Rutenberg And Ben Protess
[New York Times](#), July 21, 2018

Federal authorities examining the work President Trump's former lawyer did to squelch embarrassing stories before the 2016 election have come to believe that an important ally in that effort, the tabloid company American Media Inc., at times acted more as a political supporter than as a news organization, according to people briefed on the investigation.

That determination has kept the publisher in the middle of an inquiry that could create legal and political challenges for the president as prosecutors investigate whether the lawyer, Michael D. Cohen, violated campaign finance law.

It could also spell trouble for the company, which publishes *The National Enquirer*, raising thorny questions about when coverage that is favorable to a candidate strays into overt political activity, and when First Amendment protections should apply.

A.M.I.'s role in the inquiry received new attention on Friday with news that federal authorities had seized a recording from Mr. Cohen in which he and Mr. Trump discussed a \$150,000 deal A.M.I. struck before the election, effectively silencing a woman's claims of an affair by buying the rights to her story and not publishing it. The men also discussed whether Mr. Trump should buy the rights away from the company, which he did not

ultimately do, according to a lawyer for the president, Rudolph W. Giuliani.

The recording, from early September 2016, undercuts previous statements from Mr. Trump's representatives that he did not know about the agreement between A.M.I. and the woman, the former Playboy model Karen McDougal. It also raises questions about the extent of Mr. Cohen's involvement in the deal.

From the beginning of the campaign, A.M.I. promoted Mr. Trump and savaged his opponents, sometimes with unsubstantiated stories alleging poor health, extramarital affairs and the use of prostitutes. A.M.I.'s chairman, David J. Pecker, is a close friend of the president and his former lawyer, and company leaders were in regular contact with Mr. Cohen, former employees have said in interviews.

By burying Ms. McDougal's story during the campaign in a practice known in the tabloid industry as "catch and kill," A.M.I. protected Mr. Trump from negative publicity that could have harmed his election chances, spending money to do so.

The authorities believe that the company was not always operating in what campaign finance law calls a "legitimate press function," according to the people briefed on the investigation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. That may explain why prosecutors did not follow typical Justice Department protocol to avoid subpoenaing news organizations when possible, and to give journalists advance warning when demanding documents or other information.

Prosecutors did not warn A.M.I. before subpoenaing executives there in the spring, people with knowledge of the process said. A.M.I., which has denied any wrongdoing, did not challenge the move.

A spokesman for the United States attorney's office in the Southern District of New York, which is handling the inquiry, declined to comment.

Cameron Stracher, an A.M.I. lawyer, indicated that the company was cooperating with the investigation.

"A.M.I. respects the legitimate law enforcement activities by prosecutors in the Southern District of New York," he said. But he suggested there was some give-and-take in what A.M.I. was willing to share, adding that it "has asserted and will continue to assert its First Amendment rights in order to protect its news-gathering and editorial operations."

Mr. Cohen remains the primary focus of the investigation, but A.M.I.'s prominent place in what could become one of the biggest campaign finance scandals in recent years is unusual given the wide latitude news organizations have under the First Amendment.

While moves by prosecutors to subpoena journalists usually draw loud protest from groups that

advocate press protections, there has so far been no rallying of support for A.M.I.

Bruce D. Brown, the executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, said his group hadn't mounted a staunch defense in part because the publisher had not asked for help. The situation is otherwise too murky for his group to wade into without A.M.I.'s guidance, he said.

"It's really challenging for press advocates to get behind it because, one, we haven't been asked, and two, we just don't know enough about the circumstances to be out with them on it," Mr. Brown said.

Alexandra Ellerbeck, the North America program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said the group had not been focused on A.M.I., but added, "You don't want people doing activity that would otherwise be illegal and putting the name of press on it for protections."

The company, denying wrongdoing in the past, has said that any actions it took were journalistic, and that any contact it had with Mr. Cohen would have been in the context of reporting. It has also said that "Mr. Cohen and Mr. Trump have been personal friends of Mr. Pecker's for decades."

The authorities focused on A.M.I.'s payment to Ms. McDougal early on in their investigation of Mr. Cohen.

The company completed the deal with Ms. McDougal in August 2016, paying \$150,000 for rights to publish fitness columns under her name and for exclusive rights to her story about the affair, which Mr. Trump's representatives have denied. (After the campaign she negotiated permission to answer press questions about the alleged relationship, and later successfully sued to break the agreement.)

The New York Times reported in February that Ms. McDougal's lawyer in the deal, Keith M. Davidson, was in contact with Mr. Cohen around the time of its conclusion. Mr. Davidson said then that he was informing Mr. Cohen it was complete. A.M.I. also acknowledged contacting Mr. Cohen during its talks with Ms. McDougal, though only in an effort to corroborate her claims, it said.

If evidence shows that Mr. Cohen was consulting with A.M.I. about the arrangement, and that the intention of the deal was to protect Mr. Trump's election prospects, then the publisher and Mr. Cohen could be exposed to election law violations.

Corporations are barred from spending money to influence election outcomes in coordination with federal campaigns and candidates. Campaigns cannot accept individual donations of more than \$5,400 per election cycle.

"If this money is spent in coordination with Trump or the campaign, then it's a contribution to Trump and the campaign, and then it's illegal," said Fred Wertheimer, the founder of Democracy 21, a group supporting campaign finance regulation and enforcement.

Earlier, in 2015, A.M.I. paid \$30,000 to a Trump Organization doorman who claimed to have damaging information. After the company bought the rights, The Enquirer chose not to run the story. Executives said that was because it did not check out.

In Ms. McDougal's case, A.M.I. has argued that First Amendment protections cover the right to publish as much as the right not to publish.

If faced with campaign finance charges — which would be extraordinary for a news organization — the company could argue that its executives did not know the ins and outs of the laws they were alleged to have violated. Under criminal provisions, prosecutors would have to prove the violation was "knowing and willful," said Brendan Fischer, the director of federal reform at the Campaign Legal Center.

At the same time, Mr. Trump's campaign could argue that Mr. Cohen acted on his behalf without his knowledge, as his lawyer rather than an agent of his campaign. Mr. Giuliani appeared to lay the groundwork for such an argument on Friday when he said that the conversation captured on the tape, which took place weeks after A.M.I. completed the McDougal deal, appeared to be the first time Mr. Trump had heard about the arrangement and was therefore "exculpatory."

Addressing the tape on Twitter on Saturday, Mr. Trump wrote, "Your favorite President did nothing wrong!"

It is not clear whether prosecutors have reviewed the recording, which the Federal Bureau of Investigation seized during a raid of Mr. Cohen's office this year and which became tied up in a courtroom fight over what materials attorney-client privilege should shield from prosecutors.

Mr. Cohen's lawyer Lanny Davis said on Friday, "When the recording is heard, it will not hurt Mr. Cohen."

Jaclyn Peiser contributed reporting.

'This Is Not The Only Tape': Michael Avenatti Says There Are More Secret Recordings Of Trump

By Felicia Sonmez

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

Michael Avenatti has a warning for President Trump: More tapes are out there.

At a roundtable Sunday on ABC News, the lawyer for adult-film star Stormy Daniels said that the secret recording of Trump that was revealed two days ago is far from the only one made by Trump's longtime attorney Michael Cohen.

"This is not the only tape," Avenatti said. "I can tell you that for a fact. There's multiple tapes."

He added: "That, ultimately, is going to prove to be a big problem for the president. You know, that old adage, 'You've lived by the sword, you die by the sword,' is going to be true in this case, because the president knew that his attorney, Michael Cohen, had a predisposition toward taping conversations with people."

On Friday, three people with knowledge of the conversation told The Washington Post that Cohen had secretly taped a discussion with Trump in September 2016 about whether to purchase the rights to Playboy centerfold Karen McDougal's account of her alleged affair with Trump.

That conversation took place one month after AMI, the parent company of the National Enquirer, bought the rights to McDougal's story for \$150,000 and then shelved it.

Cohen is being investigated for potential bank and election-law crimes. The recording was among the records seized in an FBI raid of his office and residences in April, multiple people familiar with the probe said.

One of Trump's attorneys, Rudolph W. Giuliani, said in a statement Friday that the September 2016 recording is "powerful exculpatory evidence." Even so, Trump lashed out at Cohen in a tweet on Saturday, claiming that it was "totally unheard of & perhaps illegal" that his attorney would tape him, despite the fact that New York's wiretapping law permits the recording of conversations so long as at least one party agrees.

Avenatti is representing Daniels, who was paid \$130,000 by Cohen in exchange for her silence about an alleged decade-old affair with Trump. Avenatti has a history of taunting the president with claims to have more information on Trump's alleged indiscretions. In March, he tweeted an image of what appeared to be a DVD and said he was sending a "warning shot" to the president regarding his denials of an affair with Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford.

During Sunday's roundtable, retired Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz, an informal Trump adviser, pressed Avenatti to reveal how he knew of the existence of additional tapes, arguing that the leak of such information could represent a potential violation of lawyer-client privilege.

"You're not in a position where you have been given that information properly," Dershowitz said in one heated exchange.

Avenatti declined to reveal any details, maintaining that the only way he would have acted improperly would have been if he received the tape from someone in law enforcement.

"All of the information that the FBI seized, that's not under lock and key," he said, adding: "I could have received it from Michael Cohen. I could have received it from one of Michael Cohen's counsel. I could have received it from others."

Avenatti also noted that he ran into Cohen on Monday at a restaurant in New York City and that the two had a "very fruitful" conversation.

"I think he is ready to tell the truth," Avenatti said of Cohen. "And ultimately, I think he is going to cooperate with us as it relates for our search for the truth."

Cohen Dismisses As 'Innuendo' Report He Questioned Trump's Fitness As President

By Jacqueline Thomsen

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

President Trump's former longtime personal lawyer Michael Cohen reportedly dismissed as "innuendo" sources saying that he is questioning Trump's ability to serve as president, but declined to deny the report.

Axios reported Saturday that sources told the outlet Cohen has been openly questioning Trump's fitness as president since Trump's widely criticized press conference earlier this week with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"It's one thing for him [Cohen] to be concerned about his suitability to be president," one source told the news site. "It's quite another thing to be concerned about his [Trump's] loyalty to his country."

When contacted by Axios, Cohen replied in a text that he "cannot comment about someone's innuendo."

The reporter, Jonathan Swan, wrote that he told Cohen "the sourcing was solid" and gave the lawyer the chance to dispute the characterization, but that Cohen "would not do so."

Cohen tweeted on Monday that he backs the U.S. intelligence community's findings that Russia interfered in the election after Trump appeared to side with Putin's denials of election interference during a press conference with the leader.

As I said to @ABC @GStephanopoulos, "I respect our nation's intelligence agencies who determined that Russia, had in fact, interfered or meddled in our democratic process. I repudiate Russia's effort...and call on all Americans to do the same."— Michael Cohen (@MichaelCohen212) July 16, 2018

Cohen has moved to distance himself from Trump over the past few weeks, fueling speculation that the

president's former fixer may flip on Trump. Cohen is under criminal investigation for alleged financial crimes.

The relationship between the two suffered another blow on Friday when The New York Times reported that Cohen secretly recorded a conversation with Trump shortly before the 2016 election about making a payment to a former Playboy model alleging an affair with Trump.

The recording was seized when federal agents raided Cohen's offices earlier this year.

Trump knocked Cohen in a tweet Saturday, suggesting that Cohen recording their conversation was "perhaps illegal."

Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) – almost unheard of. Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client – totally unheard of & perhaps illegal. The good news is that your favorite President did nothing wrong!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 21, 2018

New York, where the discussion reportedly took place, has a one-party consent law, meaning only one person present has to give consent for a conversation to be recorded.

Michael Cohen Privately Questions Trump's Fitness To Be President

By Jonathan Swan

[Axios](#), July 21, 2018

Michael Cohen privately questions Trump's fitness to be president

Friends of Michael Cohen have noticed that since Trump's Helsinki press conference with Vladimir Putin he's been more openly questioning Trump's fitness to be president. "It's one thing for him [Cohen] to be concerned about his suitability to be president," a knowledgeable source told me. "It's quite another thing to be concerned about his [Trump's] loyalty to his country."

The source added that Cohen was sending a public signal to this effect when he tweeted, on Monday after Trump's Helsinki press conference: "As I said to @ABC @GStephanopoulos, 'I respect our nation's intelligence agencies who determined that Russia, had in fact, interfered or meddled in our democratic process. I repudiate Russia's effort...and call on all Americans to do the same.'"

Why this matters: The Trump-Cohen relationship broke down a while ago, but now the investigation of Cohen is heating up — with the NYT revealing that Cohen secretly taped Trump — the two have dispensed with the public pretense of loyalty.

The question of what Cohen knows about Trump is now a far more compelling question than it was in the

days when Cohen would tell anybody who'd listen that he'd take a bullet — and, no doubt, lie — for his boss.

Bottom line: When I texted Cohen today he declined several opportunities to deny he made these comments to friends. He told me he "cannot comment about someone's innuendo." When I replied to Cohen that the sourcing was solid and would he like to contest the way I was characterizing his thinking, he, revealingly, would not do so.

Sneak Peek: Get more stories like this from Jonathan Swan by signing up for our weekly political lookahead newsletter, Axios Sneak Peek.

Al Sharpton: Cohen Meeting Me Sends 'A Signal' To Trump

By John Bowden

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

The Rev. Al Sharpton's meeting with President Trump's longtime former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen was not happenstance but rather a planned conversation meant to send a message to Trump, the MSNBC host said.

Sharpton told MSNBC's Ali Velshi that he has a long-standing relationship with Cohen dating back to Trump's time as a real estate mogul in New York, adding that Cohen used to "arrange" meetings between the two men to discuss their differences on social justice issues.

"He was the one to try to get all sides together, usually unsuccessfully," Sharpton said.

The MSNBC host added that Cohen, who ended his years-long relationship as Trump's attorney earlier this year, was "troubled" during his conversation with Sharpton about his business with the president and the resulting media attention.

"I received a text from him saying he wanted to meet," Sharpton said. "We met at a public restaurant and we spoke for over an hour. He was very troubled and felt in many ways cast wrongly."

"And I feel he was saying that he had been abandoned by Mr. Trump," Sharpton continued, adding: "He was adamant that he was opposed to things that Mr. Trump was doing."

Sharpton told Velshi that Cohen's decision to sit down with the MSNBC host known for his work in the civil rights movement was a "signal" to Trump and Robert Mueller's special counsel investigation that he was not in lock-step with his former boss.

"Out of all the people he could reach out to, reaching out to me is sending a signal to Mr. Trump and I think, probably, to prosecutors that he was not one who would not deal with someone who has been fighting

Donald Trump for decades on social justice issues," he said.

Sharpton originally tweeted Friday about his meeting with Cohen.

"Just spent an hour w/ Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney," Sharpton wrote. "I bet you're wondering what we could be talking about! Stay tuned."

"I have known Rev for almost 20 years," Cohen responded. "No one better to talk to!"

Just spent an hour w/ Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney. I bet you're wondering what we could be talking about! Stay tuned— Reverend Al Sharpton (@TheRevAl) July 20, 2018

I have known Rev for almost 20 years. No one better to talk to! <https://t.co/3XEoHqhQyU>— Michael Cohen (@MichaelCohen212) July 20, 2018

Michael Cohen's Meeting With Al Sharpton Was Intended To Send 'Signal' To POTUS

By Chuck Ross

[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

Former Trump attorney Michael Cohen's meeting on Friday with Al Sharpton was intended to send a signal to the president, the civil rights activist says.

"Out of all the people he could reach out to, reaching out to me is sending a signal to Mr. Trump and I think, probably, to prosecutors that he was not one who would not deal with someone who has been fighting Donald Trump for decades on social justice issues," Sharpton said in an interview on MSNBC on Friday.

WATCH:

Sharpton and Cohen met at a restaurant for over an hour on Friday morning, shortly before news broke that months before the 2016 election, Cohen secretly recorded a two-minute conversation with Trump regarding Karen McDougal, a Playboy playmate who allegedly had an affair with Trump in 2006.

The Washington Post reported that Cohen suggested purchasing the rights to McDougal's story from AMI, the parent company of the National Enquirer. AMI paid McDougal \$150,000 in August 2016 for her story.

According to The Post, Trump is mostly silent in the recording. At one point he asked Cohen how the payment would be made.

"I received a text from him saying he wanted to meet," Sharpton said on Saturday. "We met at a public restaurant and we spoke for over an hour. He was very troubled and felt in many ways cast wrongly."

"And I feel he was saying that he had been abandoned by Mr. Trump," Sharpton continued, adding:

"He was adamant that he was opposed to things that Mr. Trump was doing."

Sharpton tweeted about his meeting with Cohen shortly after it ended.

"Just spent an hour w/ Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney," Sharpton wrote. "I bet you're wondering what we could be talking about! Stay tuned."

Cohen confirmed the meeting, writing that "I have known Rev for almost 20 years. No one better to talk to!"

Trump blasted his former attorney in an early-morning tweet on Saturday.

"Inconceivable that the government would break into a lawyer's office (early in the morning) – almost unheard of. Even more inconceivable that a lawyer would tape a client – totally unheard of & perhaps illegal," he wrote. (RELATED: 'Perhaps Illegal': Trump Rails Against Cohen For Taping His Private Conversations)

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan is reportedly investigating Cohen over his business dealings and possible campaign finance violations. Cohen's payments to women are reportedly a part of the investigation. Just before the 2016 election, Cohen paid \$130,000 to Stormy Daniels, an adult film star who also allegedly had an affair with Trump in 2006.

The FBI raided Cohen's home, office and hotel room on April 9.

Follow Chuck on Twitter

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Mueller Subpoenas Manhattan Madam From Spitzer Case

By Jeff Mordock

[Washington Times](#), July 20, 2018

Attorneys for Special Counsel Robert Mueller is subpoenaing Kristin Davis, also known as the "Manhattan Madam," TMZ reported Friday.

Ms. Davis worked for former Trump campaign aide Roger Stone for a decade and also interacted with Andrew Miller, a political operative who was subpoenaed by Mr. Mueller last month. Mr. Miller also ran Ms. Davis' campaign for governor of New York.

It is not clear why Mr. Mueller's team is interested in her.

Ms. Davis went to jail as part of the scandal surrounding former New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer, a Democrat.

TMZ said Ms. Davis' attorney, Daniel Hocheiser is negotiating the scope of the Mueller subpoena.

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Manhattan Madam Kristin Davis Subpoenaed By Robert Mueller

[TMZ](#), July 20, 2018

Kristin Davis, the Manhattan Madam who went to prison and was connected to former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer, is being subpoenaed in the Robert Mueller investigation ... TMZ has learned.

Davis worked for former Trump aide Roger Stone for a decade, and had numerous interactions with Stone and Andrew Miller – who ran Davis' campaign for Governor and who was subpoenaed by Mueller a month ago.

Sources familiar with the matter tell us, Davis' lawyer is negotiating the scope of the subpoena with Mueller's team.

As you know, Stone was referenced in the indictments last week of 12 Russians who allegedly meddled in the 2016 election.

Mueller Seeking To Question 'Manhattan Madam,' A Friend Of Roger Stone, In Russia Probe, She Says

By Manuel Roig-Franzia

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

Investigators in special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's office have notified an attorney for Kristin Davis, who gained notoriety in the 2000s for running a high-end prostitution ring, that they intend to question her as part of their probe of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, Davis said Friday.

Davis, who is known as the "Manhattan Madam," said she expects to be asked about her close friend, Roger Stone, a political operative and longtime confidant of President Trump. It comes one week after prosecutors unveiled an indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officers who allegedly conspired to hack Democrats during the campaign.

Stone was not named in the indictment, but messages cited by prosecutors match communications that he says he had with the Twitter persona Guccifer 2.0, who had claimed online to be a Romanian hacker.

Prosecutors say Guccifer was actually a Twitter account operated by Russian intelligence officers.

In 2016, WikiLeaks released emails hacked from the Democratic National Committee and John Podesta, a top adviser to Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. Prosecutors have said Guccifer routed the stolen

documents to the group. Stone has described his contact with Guccifer as benign, saying he was merely congratulating the Twitter persona on being reinstated after being banned from the social media platform.

"Roger's one of my best friends," Davis said in a telephone interview Friday. "I have nothing bad to say about him." She called the Mueller probe a "witch hunt" and said "in terms of Russian collusion I know nothing."

The contact by Mueller's team was first reported by TMZ. Davis's attorney, Daniel Hochheiser, could not be reached for comment. Stone declined to comment. Mueller's office also did not respond to a request for comment.

Davis is the latest of multiple current and former Stone associates to be contacted by Mueller's team. His longtime connections Sam Nunberg and Michael Caputo — both of whom held posts in Trump's 2016 campaign — have said they were questioned about Stone. Jason Sullivan, who briefly worked as Stone's social media coordinator, appeared at D.C. federal court after receiving a subpoena. And Stone's driver, John Kakanis, has also been subpoenaed.

"They seem to be going back with him and picking up people who worked for Roger, and some people who are disgruntled," Davis said.

Another former Stone aide, Andrew Miller, is seeking to quash a subpoena he received from Mueller's team. Davis said she was unsure whether she would attempt to do the same.

Davis, a former hedge fund executive, was known for running a high-end prostitution ring in New York City. She has served time in prison on prostitution charges and a drug charge.

In 2010, Stone was a strategist for Davis's campaign for New York governor, a race in which she garnered more than 20,000 votes — less than 1 percent of the total ballots cast. In the years since she has become one of Stone's closest confidants, tending to his travel and speaking schedule.

As for Stone, she said: "I feel like he's very misunderstood."

Risks Pile Up For Trump As Manafort Heads To Trial

The president's former campaign chairman is set to be the first to go before a jury in the Mueller investigation.

By Darren Samuelsohn And Josh Gerstein

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

The first trial prosecuted by special counsel Robert Mueller will offer the clearest public view yet of what his investigators have on President Donald Trump's former

campaign manager, Paul Manafort, with a catalogue of evidence and testimony undercutting the president's repeated claims that the Russia investigation is a "witch hunt."

Trump, his lawyers and some of his closest associates have spent months publicly dismissing the Manafort case, scheduled to begin this week in an Alexandria, Virginia, federal court. They argue it's all about the personal legal woes of someone who has lobbied for some of the world's most controversial leaders but has nothing to do with the president or his 2016 campaign.

"We have no concern about it," Rudy Giuliani, one of Trump's personal attorneys, told POLITICO. "The whole case will be like everything else. They chase it down an alley until they think they've got something legitimate, and it will not connect to the original investigation."

But the Manafort trial will create daily reminders of the Mueller investigation, as commentators pile onto cable networks to discuss what the case could indicate about the president's own exposure — and, potentially, as the president himself offers his own analysis on Twitter.

Whether he addresses it publicly or not, Trump will have to pay close attention given the array of legal investigations involving various former associates, said Alan Dershowitz, the retired Harvard law professor who is close to Trump. "Of course the president has to watch. He has to watch everything Mueller is doing," he said. Dershowitz specifically mentioned the Southern District of New York, the federal jurisdiction that's investigating Michael Cohen, the longtime Trump Organization personal lawyer, who has dropped hints he may cooperate with the government.

Mueller's office has said it does not intend to raise Russian collusion allegations, but it has signaled plans to showcase aspects of Manafort's work during the Trump campaign: namely a claim that he succeeded in getting \$16 million in loans from Chicago's Federal Savings Bank in late 2016 and early 2017 in part because the bank's chairman and CEO, Stephen Calk, was named to the Trump campaign's economic advisory board and was seeking a top post at the Pentagon.

Through a spokeswoman, the bank has denied any wrongdoing and pledged to cooperate with Mueller's investigation. Calk has not responded to requests for comment.

Mueller's prosecutors in June also unsealed search warrant applications in the Virginia case showing Manafort and his wife received a \$10 million loan in 2010 from Oleg Deripaska, a Russian oligarch linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin. In July 2016, Manafort

used a longtime associate who has also since been indicted by Mueller as an intermediary to reportedly offer "private briefings" for Deripaska about the Trump campaign.

U.S. District Court Judge T.S. Ellis III, a Ronald Reagan appointee, has yet to rule on what, if any, mention of the campaign will be allowed in front of jurors. The issue is among those on the agenda for a hearing set for Monday morning, about 48 hours before jury selection is set to begin in the trial.

Manafort's defense team has asked Ellis to forbid any mention of Manafort's connection to Trump and his campaign. They argue that discussion of that work and of Mueller's core assignment to investigate alleged collusion between the campaign and Russia is "wholly irrelevant" to the bank fraud and tax evasion charges. They also fear that references to Manafort's Trump campaign role could prompt jurors who dislike the president to take that out on Manafort, regardless of what the evidence shows.

"There is a very real risk that the jurors in this case — most of whom likely have strong views about President Trump, or have likely formed strong opinions as to the well-publicized allegations that the campaign colluded with Russian officials — will be unable to separate their opinions and beliefs about those matters from the tax and bank fraud matters to be tried before them in this case," the defense wrote in a pretrial motion filed last month.

The president himself has made little effort to conceal his close attention to the case, repeatedly mentioning it since Manafort was indicted last October.

Less than two hours after Manafort lost his release on bail amid allegations of witness tampering in June, Trump tweeted: "Wow, what a tough sentence for Paul Manafort, who has represented Ronald Reagan, Bob Dole and many other top political people and campaigns. Didn't know Manafort was the head of the Mob. What about Comey and Crooked Hillary and all of the others? Very unfair!"

Manafort was also on Trump's mind in the aftermath of his controversial summit last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "With Paul Manafort, who clearly is a nice man, you look at what's going on with him, it's like Al Capone," Trump told Fox News' Sean Hannity in an interview from Helsinki.

Trump's interest in the Manafort's case has also extended to pretrial legal skirmishes, with the president himself taking the unusual step of celebrating media reports about a hearing during which Ellis grilled Mueller's prosecutors about a defense motion challenging the special counsel's authority.

Breaking with long-standing precedent under which presidents avoid mentioning judges by name, Trump singled out Ellis as “highly respected” and “something very special” during an off-script moment addressing the National Rifle Association’s annual meeting in Dallas.

Giuliani also told POLITICO this past spring that he may try to use Ellis’ remarks in any potential legal fight with Mueller over the special counsel’s push for a sit-down interview with Trump. Among the dozens of leaked questions that the president’s lawyers have prepared for Trump in preparation for a possible Mueller meeting is one asking what knowledge Trump had of any outreach to Russia by his campaign, including Manafort, for potential help during his 2016 run.

“It shows the concern that the president has raised that this is a witch hunt,” the former New York mayor said. “The judge’s observation was — and they had no good answer for him — that they’re just going after Manafort, they’re not even interested in Manafort, all they want to do is kind of trap the president. So that’s really important to us because we don’t want him trapped.”

The president’s efforts to use Ellis’ comments for their own political and legal gain may have been premature. Last month, the judge rejected Manafort’s pretrial challenge that Mueller lacked the authority to bring criminal charges.

Mark Corallo, a former Trump legal team spokesman, said he expects potential damage to Trump from the Manafort trials will be limited “unless there’s evidence of some tie-in to collusion with the Russians to disturb the election and that other members of the Trump campaign were aware of it.”

But he also said the president should temper his celebration even if Manafort is acquitted. “I would be hesitant to spike the ball in the end zone if I were the Trump administration,” he said, noting that Manafort faces a second trial in Washington, D.C., in September connected with his lobbying for Russian-backed Ukrainian political leaders.

“It’s obvious if Manafort is convicted, the White House is going to distance itself from Manafort even more than they already have,” Corallo said. “But I think they benefit by distancing themselves no matter what.”

Others in Trump’s circle disagree.

“Paul is one of the few in this mess who he’s spoken about by name,” said former Trump campaign adviser Michael Caputo. “It’s my hope the president watches closely and says what’s on his mind.”

Should the Northern Virginia jury find Manafort guilty, Trump will immediately face a decision on whether to pardon him or commute his prison sentence. Either

move would expose Trump to further charges he’s trying to obstruct justice — but they also could head off a possible scenario that no one in the president’s orbit wants to see happen: The 69-year old Manafort accepts a reduced sentence in exchange for spilling to Mueller everything he knows about the president.

“If he’s convicted, you’ll hear sphincters loosening all over the White House,” said a defense attorney who represents a senior Trump official.

“Once he’s convicted it becomes a more naked effort to obstruct the inquiry,” the lawyer added. “Things always look worse after a trial once you’ve put live witnesses on the stand and released documents. It’s hard to put that back in the bottle.”

How Long Will Mueller’s Investigation Go On?

By Katelyn Polantz

[CNN](#), July 22, 2018

(CNN)With the recent criminal indictment of 12 Russian intelligence agents, the special counsel’s office made clear it has a treasure trove of information for its investigation into Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election. What’s less obvious is how long Robert Mueller will continue his work.

Mueller team wants to talk to ‘Manhattan Madam’

The indictment could be the high point for his team. Or it could be simply the crest of one of several coming waves.

An investigative interview of President Donald Trump, likely regarding Mueller’s probe into whether the President obstructed justice, still hangs in the air. So do the legs of the investigation involving former campaign chairman Paul Manafort’s role on the campaign, and involving former national security adviser Michael Flynn’s cooperation with investigators.

There are already some signs that Mueller’s office is prepared for an ultimate wind-down. Prosecutors from the US Attorney’s Office in Washington and the Department of Justice’s national security division are working on cases brought by Mueller, signaling that they’ll see them through if the special counsel’s office disappears before the court actions conclude.

And federal prosecutors in Manhattan separate from Mueller are handling the investigation into the president’s former personal attorney, Michael Cohen, which may touch on payments to women with whom Trump allegedly had extramarital affairs during the campaign.

Even so, Mueller still appears to be shepherding several related investigations that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein laid out in a memo for Mueller

last August. The memo appears to describe the scope of the investigation point by point. Almost a full page of the discussion of Mueller's scope is still hidden from public view.

Yet some parts of the still-secret investigation have become evident.

The President

Chiefly, there's no conclusive public finding yet into whether Trump intended to obstruct justice or knew of illegal coordination — if there was any — between his campaign and the Russian government.

A conclusion may not come before the end of the year, given the timing of the midterm elections.

24 headlines that sum up 1 very bad week for Donald Trump

Under Justice Department custom, prosecutors generally avoid overt investigative steps and returning indictments against a candidate for office within 60 days of an election. That rule is not set forth in any official policy or regulation, however. Mueller could always ask Rosenstein for an exception. Or he could look at the example of former FBI Director James Comey, who was roundly criticized for making a statement on the investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails 11 days before the 2016 presidential election.

One investigative step that appears to be in Mueller's plan is interviewing the President.

The possibility of an investigatory interview with Trump has haunted the Oval Office for half a year now, as the President's then-attorneys John Dowd and Ty Cobb, and later Rudy Giuliani and others, have gone back and forth with Mueller.

If the two sides cannot reach an agreement, a grand jury subpoena to force Trump to talk could be in the works. That would likely lead to a fight over presidential power under the Constitution — and may end up at the Supreme Court.

Perhaps Mueller doesn't need Trump on the record. He already has dozens of witness interviews, plus hundreds of Trump's own tweets, public speeches and on-camera interviews.

If Mueller chose not to indict the President, he will likely present his findings in a report to Congress. That could include a recommendation to impeach Trump.

RELATED: Russians attempted to infiltrate three 2018 campaigns, Microsoft says

Flynn still helping

Former national security adviser Michael Flynn cut a plea deal with investigators last December. There has been no apparent conclusion to that part of the investigation, and the amount of information Flynn has given them hasn't yet become public.

Flynn has spoken with prosecutors about his conversations during the presidential transition. Those conversations relayed details from the Russian ambassador to senior Trump campaign officials including Jared Kushner, according to his charging documents.

At a court appearance last week, a federal judge made clear Flynn hasn't been sentenced yet for lying to investigators because he continues to cooperate with prosecutors. That signals that more criminal cases related to what Flynn knows could be coming.

Manafort fears more

The Russian accused of using sex, lies and guns to infiltrate US politics

Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort has been charged on crimes related to his Ukrainian lobbying and financial disclosures. Manafort says he is not guilty and is awaiting two trials, with the first set to start July 25.

Rick Gates, Manafort's longtime deputy and another top Trump campaign and inauguration official, hasn't appeared in public since he pleaded guilty in February to lesser charges than he first faced. Gates is now helping Mueller's office, likely with the prosecution's cases against Manafort.

He could also be contributing to other parts of the investigation. Mueller's team initially sought Gates' help to accomplish its central mission of investigating the campaign and Russian collusion, CNN reported in March.

Prosecutors haven't yet said publicly what they'll do with Manafort's Russian connections during the campaign. His attorneys have said in court they believe Mueller continues to investigate him.

Russian threads

Then there are the Russians. The hack of the Democratic Party and Clinton campaign during 2016 fell into Mueller's purview from the start. Those charges surfaced July 13, when Mueller's team indicted 12 Russian military intelligence agents for their alleged conspiracy. But several unnamed people in the indictment — including a congressional candidate who allegedly asked the Russians for stolen emails, plus entities that appear to be WikiLeaks and Trump adviser Roger Stone, who communicated with the hackers — haven't been charged.

Mueller's team also said in a court filing late Monday night that even before Mueller started work last May, federal officials were looking into another group of Russians. Those Russians, a team of Russians and Russian companies that distributed anti-Hillary Clinton propaganda over social media, have since been charged.

JUST WATCHEDStone: Think I'm probably person
in indictment
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Stone: Think I'm probably person in indictment
01:54

What else?

That leaves several possible threads that Mueller's office has pulled on and have yet to resolve. What will become of the case about Stone, who's had several of his associates testify before Mueller's grand jury? CNN reported that Mueller's team has been in a court tangle with the attorneys of a former employee of Stone's. Their hour-and-a-half-long sealed hearing on July 18 suggests the grand jury investigation of Stone presses on.

Is there more to George Papadopoulos' dealings with the campaign that Mueller will pursue? The public will likely learn more in September about Papadopoulos' cooperation with the special counsel's office, in advance of and when he is sentenced. Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to lying to investigators about his contacts with Trump campaign officials and suspected Russian agents. While he worked on the Trump campaign and before the hackers leaked their stolen materials, Papadopoulos reportedly learned the Russians could offer "political dirt" on Hillary Clinton. That hasn't yet tied back to Mueller's case against the hackers who distributed that "dirt."

Finally, what did Mueller find about that June 2016 Trump Tower meeting between the top campaign officials and Russians?

A definitive end?

In the court papers Monday related to the Russian troll farm, Mueller's team wrote about how their investigation will reach a definitive end.

When it does, Mueller will have to provide Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein a confidential report explaining his decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute. Rosenstein gets to sign off on every potential criminal case and would have to tell Congress if the Justice Department decides not to pursue a case the Mueller's office recommends.

Mueller's team acknowledges that their work could always be cut short – if Rosenstein makes it so. Mueller could be fired for misconduct or "good cause," such as violating Department of Justice policies, or Rosenstein could choose to end the investigation.

There's one more way for Mueller's investigation to naturally end: If Rosenstein wants, he could let it expire with the end of the federal government's fiscal year, which is September 30, according to the court filing.

"Special counsels appointed under the regulation can be expected to have a limited time horizon and the

investigation a definite endpoint," the prosecutors wrote. "The lifespan and scope of the investigation at all times stay within the [acting] Attorney General's control."

CNN's Laura Jarrett and Gloria Borger contributed to this report.

Dems Plan Longshot Gambit To Force Action On Mueller Protection Bill

By Kyle Cheney

[Politico](#), July 20, 2018

House Democrats are moving Friday to force Republicans to hold a hearing on a measure that would prevent President Donald Trump from unilaterally removing special counsel Robert Mueller.

Three Democrats on the powerful Judiciary Committee are invoking an obscure House rule that permits a handful of lawmakers to call for a "special meeting" on any bill. If the committee's chairman, Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.), declines to approve the meeting within three days, the panel's 40 members of the panel — 23 Republicans and 17 Democrats — have an opportunity to overrule him and hold the meeting anyway.

"We do not take these actions lightly, but believe that we are left with no other choice given the circumstances," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), the ranking Democrat on the committee, in a letter also signed by Reps. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) and Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.)

It's a longshot gambit — the Republican-controlled committee is virtually guaranteed to support Goodlatte. But it's the latest effort by Democrats to spotlight inaction on measures they describe as increasingly urgent as Trump has more aggressively challenged the validity of Mueller's probe.

Goodlatte aides were not immediately available for comment.

Mueller's probe of contacts between the Trump campaign and Russians has become increasingly perilous to Trump's inner circle and has dogged the president as he's attempted to forge closer ties to Putin — even against the advice of his senior national security and intelligence teams. Trump has decried the probe as a politically driven "witch hunt."

But his attacks reached new and unsettling heights on Monday when Trump denigrated Mueller alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin. The display prompted bipartisan derision — one House Republican even described Trump as being manipulated by the Russian president. But that bipartisanship has stalled when it comes to any concrete actions.

The Judiciary Committee is the forum for much of the conflict in the GOP-controlled House because it oversees the FBI and Justice Department. Republicans leading the committee have poured their energy into investigating whether the origins of the Mueller probe were rooted in anti-Trump bias expressed by a handful of FBI agents in recently unearthed text messages. So far, internal reviews have found no evidence that the probe was tainted by bias.

Judiciary Committee Democrats, meanwhile, have become emboldened in recent weeks to use the few procedural tactics at their disposal to disrupt committee Republicans' drive to undercut the Trump-Russia investigators. They were buoyed earlier this month when, during an intense grilling of FBI counterintelligence agent Peter Strzok, they used the rules and procedural motions repeatedly to stall the hearing and disrupt GOP lines of questioning.

Republicans have beaten back these Democratic procedural maneuvers and contended that Democrats are overlooking problems in the upper ranks of the FBI and Justice Department in order to take political shots at Trump.

In their latest effort, Democrats are planning to invoke a rule that has, according to the Congressional Research Service, never been successfully invoked in the House. A similar provision in the Senate rules came into play during an ill-fated effort to confirm former Massachusetts Gov. William Weld as ambassador to Mexico in 1997. At the time, then Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Jesse Helms refused to hold a hearing on Weld's nomination and fellow Republicans attempted to convene one without him.

Under the rule, first adopted in 1931, the Democrats have called for a "special meeting" to consider a bill that would prevent Trump from firing Mueller without "good cause." Any special counsel removed under this provision could challenge the effort in court. The measure has drawn bipartisan support, with at least seven House Republicans backing it.

If Goodlatte ignores their request for three days, the Democrats may solicit the support of other committee members to sidestep him and hold a meeting anyway. That would require at least four Republicans to sign on to their effort, an unlikely prospect on a committee riven by intense partisanship.

Russian Firm Indicted In Special Counsel Probe Cites Kavanaugh Decision To Argue That Charge Should Be Dismissed

By Robert Barnes

[Washington Post](#), July 19, 2018

A Russian company accused by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III of being part of an online operation to disrupt the 2016 presidential campaign is leaning in part on a decision by Supreme Court nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh to argue that the charge against it should be thrown out.

The 2011 decision by Kavanaugh, writing for a three-judge panel, concerned the role that foreign nationals may play in U.S. elections. It upheld a federal law that said foreigners temporarily in the country may not donate money to candidates, contribute to political parties and groups, or spend money advocating for or against candidates. But it did not rule out letting foreigners spend money on independent advocacy campaigns.

Kavanaugh "went out of his way to limit the decision," said Daniel A. Petalas, a Washington lawyer and former interim general counsel for the Federal Election Commission.

A motion filed by the Russian company this week repeatedly cites Kavanaugh's decision, bringing new attention to his rulings on campaign finance laws and regulations during his tenure on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

Legal experts who have analyzed his work say he appears to fit comfortably within the high court's conservative majority, which has found that restrictions on campaign-related spending conflict with the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech. That argument underpinned the seminal 2010 Citizens United case, which allowed corporations and other organizations to spend unlimited sums on independent political activity.

In the case of the foreign national decision, Kavanaugh said the government would have to prove that foreign nationals had knowledge of the law's restrictions before seeking criminal charges. And he said the ban did not include foreign spending on "issue advocacy and speaking out on issues of public policy."

The Supreme Court affirmed the decision in 2012 in a one-sentence order, without noted dissent or scheduling the case for a hearing. The Obama administration had asked the opinion be affirmed, arguing in a brief that the federal law was narrowly tailored to respect the speech rights of foreigners.

Neither the law in question "nor any other provision of federal law prohibits foreign nationals from speaking out on issues of public policy," wrote Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli. "The statute thus leaves open . . . a broad range of expressive activity, from contributing to issue groups, to creating advocacy websites, to funding mass television advertising."

The exceptions, said Richard Hasen, an election-law expert at the University of California at Irvine, create

“potentially a huge loophole for foreign and undisclosed issue ads on federal elections.”

Kavanaugh's decision has been embraced by Concord Management and Consulting, one of 16 Russian individuals or companies indicted by a federal grand jury in February in connection with allegedly taking part in an “information warfare” campaign aimed at swaying American voters.

The indictment alleged that Concord paid \$1.25 million a month to the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency for projects such as setting up rallies for President Trump or various advocacy groups in the United States, creating Twitter and Facebook accounts to spread false information and “to interfere in U.S. political and electoral processes without detection of their Russian affiliation.” The company was charged with one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States.

Concord is alleged to be controlled by Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a Russian catering magnate known as “Putin's chef” for his longtime associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin. It is the only one of those charged to have responded to the indictments.

In Concord's motion to dismiss the charge, its attorneys frequently cited Kavanaugh and his 2011 decision in *Bluman v. Federal Election Commission*.

The lawyers noted that Kavanaugh distinguished between explicitly political ads — those that urge the public to vote for or against a candidate — and so-called issue ads.

“Foreign nationals are not barred from issue advocacy through political speech such as what is described in the indictment — they are only precluded from willfully making expenditures that expressly advocate the election or defeat of a particular candidate,” wrote Washington lawyers Eric A. Dubelier and Katherine J. Seikaly, who are defending the company, citing the *Bluman* decision.

It is the second issue related to Mueller's investigation that is sure to receive attention at Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing. He said in a 2009 law review article that presidents should not be distracted by civil lawsuits and criminal investigations and that Congress might be “wise” to provide such protection until they are no longer in office.

Like Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, who also was a Trump nominee, Kavanaugh appears to fit the mold of Justice Antonin Scalia, who joined the court's conservatives — Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito Jr. — as skeptics of the constitutionality of many campaign finance restrictions.

“Based on his opinions and public statements, as a Supreme Court justice Kavanaugh would almost

certainly be a reliable vote to overturn campaign finance restrictions in the Scalia/Alito/Roberts mold,” said Andrew D. Herman, a Washington lawyer who practices campaign finance law.

Kavanaugh joined the rest of the circuit in ruling in 2010's *SpeechNow.org v. FEC* that federal contribution limits cannot be applied to “independent expenditure committees,” finding that the Supreme Court's analysis in *Citizens United* required it. That decision gave rise to super PACs, which can collect unlimited sums from individuals and companies.

Even before the Supreme Court decided *Citizens United*, Kavanaugh wrote for his court in a 2009 case called *Emily's List v. FEC*, ruling against regulations that required independent nonprofit organizations to comply with federal contribution limits.

The rules “do not pass muster under the Supreme Court's First Amendment precedents,” Kavanaugh wrote. “The regulations are not closely drawn to serve a cognizable anticorruption interest. Donations to and spending by a non-profit cannot corrupt a candidate or officeholder.”

A year later, he affirmed rules limiting how much money can flow to political parties — noting that Supreme Court precedent gave him no choice.

In *Republican National Committee v. FEC* in 2010, Kavanaugh wrote for a three-judge panel in upholding contribution limits on federal candidates and parties. He cited the Supreme Court's rulings that such limitations are warranted because of the potential for corruption or the appearance of corruption.

In the wake of *Citizens United* and the advent of super PACs, the RNC said the restrictions left political parties hamstrung.

The RNC position was logical, Kavanaugh agreed. “As a lower court, however, we do not believe we possess authority to clarify or refine [Supreme Court precedent] in the fashion advocated by the RNC, or to otherwise get ahead of the Supreme Court,” he wrote.

Hasen said a big question will be whether Kavanaugh would be skeptical of restrictions on contributions to political parties and candidates on the high court. “I think that we don't know,” he said.

The *Bluman* ruling is likely to receive outsize attention in Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings because it is now being cited in an active case about Russian interference in the 2016 campaign.

[Russian troll farm, 13 suspects indicted in 2016 election interference]

As a test case, its facts were rather benign. Benjamin Bluman and Asenath Steiman were foreign nationals living legally and temporarily in the United States.

Bluman, a Canadian, said he wanted to contribute to Democrats running for office, and print and distribute fliers in Central Park supporting President Barack Obama's reelection. Steiman, a dual citizen of Canada and Israel, said she wanted to contribute to Obama's eventual Republican opponent and to an independent organization that supports conservative candidates.

Bluman and Steiman said the federal ban on those activities was unconstitutional.

But Kavanaugh and his fellow judges on the panel said the Supreme Court had made it clear that the government may exclude foreign nationals from activities "intimately related to the process of democratic self-government," quoting a precedent. Contributing to a political party and spending money to advocate for or against a specific candidate are easily included, he wrote.

But he also articulated "three important limits."

He said the ban might not be applicable to permanent legal residents. Nor should the ruling be read to support bans on foreign nationals spending money to express their views on issues, as opposed to advocating for the election or defeat of specific candidates.

He said that to bring criminal prosecutions, the government must show that the defendant acted willfully in defiance of the law. "There are many aliens in this country who no doubt are unaware of the statutory ban on foreign expenditures, in particular," he wrote.

Herman said Kavanaugh's carve-outs show "that he is both being a careful jurist but also indicating to Congress that he would be more skeptical of the types of restrictions referenced in that paragraph. For example, permanent residents' First Amendment rights might take precedence over more general security concerns."

Hasen said that Kavanaugh's decision provides a road map of how he might decide such an issue — finding it improper for a foreign national to finance an ad that says, "Vote against Hillary," for example, but not one that says, "Hillary is Satan."

Tom Jackman contributed to this report.

Gowdy: If Collusion Evidence Existed, Adam Schiff Would Have Leaked It

By Chuck Ross

[Daily Caller](#), July 22, 2018

South Carolina Rep. Trey Gowdy said Sunday that, after 18 months of congressional investigation into possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russian government, he has yet to see a "scintilla" of evidence showing that there was coordination between the two sides.

The Republican also said it is unlikely that any Democrat has seen evidence of collusion because if they had, California Rep. Adam Schiff would have already leaked it.

"I have not seen one scintilla of evidence that this president colluded, conspired, confederated with Russia, and neither has anyone else, or you may rest assured Adam Schiff would have leaked it," Gowdy said during an interview on "Fox News Sunday."

"That's why they've moved off of collusion onto obstruction of justice, which is now their current preoccupation," he added.

Gowdy, who is a member of the House Intelligence Committee and chairman of the Committee on House Oversight & Government Reform, said he has likely seen more government documents related to the collusion investigation than anyone in Congress.

In past interviews, Schiff, the top Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, has claimed that he has seen "more than circumstantial evidence" of collusion. But when pressed to identify the evidence, Schiff has stopped short of showing that President Donald Trump or members of his campaign conspired with Russian government officials to release Democrats' hacked emails. (RELATED: Gowdy: Republicans 'Don't Give A Damn' About What Adam Schiff Thinks)

In an appearance on ABC News' George Stephanopoulos on Sunday, Schiff said Trump is "acting like someone who's compromised."

"It may very well be that he is compromised or it may very well be that he believes that he's compromised, that the Russians have information on him," he said.

Exclusive – Darrell Issa: FBI Probably Hacked The Russian Hackers To Gather Evidence

By Robert Kraychik

[Breitbart](#), July 20, 2018

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) described last week's grand jury indictment of 12 Russian military intelligence operatives — via allegations and information presented by Special Counsel Robert Mueller's team — as part of "a game to get the public to see something that isn't there." He offered his remarks on Wednesday's edition of SiriusXM's Breitbart News Tonight in an interview with Breitbart News Senior Editors-at-Large Rebecca Mansour and Joel Pollak.

Issa said, "The premise of the Russian probe is all about a collusion for which there's not one piece of evidence after a year and a half, and the original investigation was tainted by Peter Strzok and his

activities. A lot of people missed it, but it's not an accident that the downgrading of the offense by Hillary Clinton from a crime to a non-crime — that language change — occurred on Peter Strzok's own computer, and he finally said, 'Well, according to the metadata, it was my computer' Well, of course it was your computer; you did it."

Issa continued, "When you look at this, whether it's the Department of Justice, the FBI, or even the same intelligence networks that Democrats constantly remind us said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that were, for the most part, not found, so when the president says the equivalent of 'trust, but verify' — to use a Reagan term — why wouldn't he? Why wouldn't he always say, 'I want to have second sources, and I want to verify things, and that you take no one at blind faith when there are lives in such great numbers at stake.'?"

Issa warned of reciprocal consequences from foreign states should President Donald Trump demand the extradition of Russian nationals indicted via Mueller's allegations. He observed, "If [Donald Trump] had supported these indictments, and said, 'Yes, absolutely, turn [the indicted Russian intelligence operatives] over,' what would Putin have appropriately said? Or maybe even the Italian government, to use more of an ally? 'Okay, fine, you turn over your spies who we have named and asked for from various things.'"

Issa added, "Italy has issued arrest warrants for multiple CIA agents who they have credible evidence performed a rendition in their country and took a foreign national out and took him out, and took him to Guantanamo, essentially. They want him back. Well, we're not turning over our CIA operatives."

Issa noted Comey's record of making false statements while testifying under oath before congressional committees. He remarked, "Let's just look at the indictment and who it came from. It came from the same Department of Justice based on the FBI work that former [FBI] Director Comey was running just a few years ago. Remember that Director Comey came before the Judiciary Committee and said he absolutely needed a court order to force Apple to write a piece of software to remotely go into the San Bernardino shooter's iPhone, unlock it, and tell him what was there. What was amazing he swore under oath that — and this is the director of the FBI, before he was fired — that they had used all their vast assets, and the FBI was the best. A few weeks later, they paid some service who unlocked it for them, and just about the same time a college professor published for \$250 worth of hardware what it would take to actually duplicate that chip and decode it in a manner of minutes. So, we've been lied to directly by

the FBI director, and that's just an example where he was proven to lie by people that weren't Republicans or Democrats."

Issa described as ironic the issuance of indictments related to criminal hacking based on information likely obtained by criminal hacking. He said, "When you see these indictments of people who will never be brought to trial, the information about how they found out who they were will never be gotten. It's frivolous on its face. That doesn't mean I wouldn't like to catch these guys and put them where all spies go, but let's understand — and I'm going to belabor a point for a moment, if I can — how did we find out who these spies were? We probably used our own hackers to go into their computers and find out who they were, and so the irony of claiming that these people we found out; we didn't find out about these people because we made a phone call and asked, 'Who are your spies on this?' We found out through clandestine illegal sources, but we're not going to allow an indictment in Russia to have those people go. "

Issa concluded, "Much of what you see and hear, right now, is a game to get the public to see something that isn't there. President Trump has worked harder than any other president in my lifetime to liberate America, to make it free and secure to revitalize our military, and he has been an appropriate enemy of Russia activity while in fact reaching out and trying to do an extension of the START Nuclear Treaty and deal with Iran, North Korea, and Syria."

Follow Robert Kraychik on Twitter.

Russian Operatives Blasted 18,000 Tweets Ahead Of A Huge News Day During The 2016 Presidential Campaign. Did They Know What Was Coming?

By Craig Timberg And Shane Harris
[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

On the eve of one of the newsiest days of the 2016 presidential election season, a group of Russian operatives fired off tweets at a furious pace, about a dozen each minute. By the time they finished, more than 18,000 had been sent through cyberspace toward unwitting American voters, making it the busiest day by far in a disinformation operation with an aftermath still roiling U.S. politics.

The reason for this burst of activity on Oct. 6, 2016, documented in a new trove of 3 million Russian tweets collected by Clemson University researchers, is a mystery that has generated intriguing theories but no definitive explanation.

The theories attempt to make sense of how such a heavy flow of Russian disinformation might be related to what came immediately after, on Oct. 7.

This was the day when WikiLeaks began releasing embarrassing emails that Russian intelligence operatives had stolen from the campaign chairman for Democrat Hillary Clinton, revealing sensitive internal conversations that would stir controversy for weeks.

The Clemson researchers and others familiar with their findings think there probably is a connection between this looming release and the torrent of tweets, which varied widely in content but included a heavy dose of political commentary. "Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump: Which one is worse: Lucifer, Satan or The Devil?" said one tweet from an account called Gwenny that directed readers to a YouTube video.

Complicating this analysis is the number of other noteworthy events on that day, which is best remembered for The Washington Post's publication of a recording of Republican Donald Trump speaking crudely about women.

Also on that day U.S. intelligence officials first made public their growing concerns about Russian interference in the presidential election, following reports about the hacking of prominent Americans and intrusions into election systems in several U.S. states.

Could the Russian disinformation teams have gotten advanced notice of the WikiLeaks release, sending the operatives into overdrive to shape public reactions to the news? And what do the operatives' actions that day reveal about Russia's strategy and tactics now that Americans are heading into another crucial election in just a few months?

These questions flow from the work of a pair of Clemson University researchers who have assembled the largest trove of Russian disinformation tweets available so far. The database includes tweets between February 2014 and May 2018, all from accounts that Twitter has identified as part of the disinformation campaign waged by the Internet Research Agency, based in St. Petersburg and owned by an associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Collectively the new data offer yet more evidence of the coordinated nature of Russia's attempt to manipulate the American election. The Clemson researchers dubbed it "state-sponsored agenda building."

The tweets overall reveal a highly adaptive operation that interacted tens of millions of times with authentic Twitter users — many of whom retweeted the Russian accounts — and frequently shifted tactics in response to public events, such as Hillary Clinton's stumble at a Sept. 11 memorial.

The researchers also found the Russians working for the Internet Research Agency — often called "trolls" for their efforts to manipulate online conversation — picked up their average pace of tweeting after Trump's election. This was especially true for the more than 600 accounts targeting the conservative voters who were part of his electoral base, a surge the researchers suspect was an effort to shape the political agenda during the transition period by energizing core supporters.

But for sheer curiosity, nothing in the Clemson data set rivals Oct. 6. Given the remarkable combination of news events the following day, several analysts, including the Clemson researchers, suspect there was a connection to the coming WikiLeaks release. (There is no obvious evidence connecting the tweets to the release of the Trump recording, the researchers and others familiar with their findings say.)

Last week's indictment of Russian intelligence officers by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III made clear that the hack of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta's emails and their distribution through WikiLeaks was a meticulous operation. Tipping off the Internet Research Agency might have been part of an overarching plan, said several people familiar with the Clemson findings about the activity of the Russian trolls.

"They tend to ramp up when they know something's coming," said Clint Watts, a former FBI agent and expert on the Russian troll armies and how they respond to news as well as coming events, such as debates or candidate appearances.

Though Watts did not participate in the Clemson research, his assessment meshes with that of the researchers, Darren L. Linvill and Patrick L. Warren, who point to the odd consistency of the storm of tweets. More than on any other day, the trolls on Oct. 6 focused their energies on a left-leaning audience, with more than 70 percent of the tweets targeting Clinton's natural constituency of liberals, environmentalists and African Americans.

Linvill and Warren, who have written a paper on their research now undergoing peer review, identified 230 accounts they categorized as "Left Trolls" because they sought to infiltrate left-wing conversation on Twitter.

But the Left Trolls did so in a way clearly designed to damage Clinton, who is portrayed as corrupt, in poor health, dishonest and insensitive to the needs of working-class voters and various minority groups. By contrast, the Left Trolls celebrated Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and his insurgent primary campaign against Clinton and, in the general election, Green Party candidate Jill Stein.

Less than two weeks before Election Day, for example, the Left Troll account @Blackivists tweeted, "NO LIVES MATTER TO HILLARY CLINTON. ONLY VOTES MATTER TO HILLARY CLINTON."

Ninety-three of the Left Troll accounts were active on Oct. 6 and 7, each with an average following of 1,760 other Twitter accounts. Taken together, their messages could have directly reached Twitter accounts 20 million times on those two days and reached millions of others through retweets, the Clemson researchers found.

The release of Podesta's emails made public candid, unflattering comments about Sanders and fueled allegations that Clinton had triumphed over him because of her connections to the Democratic Party establishment. The Left Trolls on Oct. 6 appeared to be stirring up conversation among Twitter users potentially interested in such arguments, the Clemson researchers said.

"We think that they were trying to activate and energize the left wing of the Democratic Party, the Bernie wing basically, before the WikiLeaks release that implicated Hillary in stealing the Democratic primary," said Warren, an associate professor of economics.

U.S. officials with knowledge of information that the government has gathered on the Russian operation said they had yet to establish a clear connection between WikiLeaks and the troll accounts that would prove they were coordinating around the release of campaign emails. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to share assessments not approved for official release.

But some clues have emerged that may point to coordination. It now appears that WikiLeaks intended to publish the Podesta emails closer to the election and that some external event compelled the group to publish sooner than planned, the officials said.

"There is definitely a command and control structure behind the IRA's use of social media, pushing narratives and leading people towards certain conclusions," said one of the U.S. officials.

Warren and Linvill, an associate professor of communication, found Russian disinformation tweets generated significant conversation among other Twitter users. Between September and November 2016, references to the Internet Research Agency accounts showed up in others' tweets 4.7 million times.

The patterns of tweets also shows how a single team of trolls worked on different types of accounts depending on shifting priorities, one hour playing the part of an immigrant-bashing conservative, the next an African American concerned about police brutality, and on the third an avid participant in "hashtag games" in which Twitter users riff on particular questions such as "#WasteAMillionIn3Words." The answer on July 11,

2015, from IRA account @LoraGreen was, "Donate to #Hillary."

"Day-to-day they seem to be operating as a business, just allocating resources," said Linvill. "It's definitely one organization. It's not one fat guy sitting in his house."

Twitter declined to comment on the Clemson research, which has not yet been published.

Warren and Linvill collected their set of Internet Research Agency tweets using a social media analysis tool called Social Studio, which catalogues tweets in a searchable format. The researchers collected all of the available tweets from 3,841 accounts that Twitter has identified as having been controlled by the Internet Research Agency, whose officials and affiliated companies have been charged with several crimes related to the 2016 election. (Representatives for some of those charged have denied the allegations against them.)

The Clemson researchers sorted the Internet Research Agency accounts into five categories, with the largest two being "Right Troll" and "Left Troll." The others focused on retweeting news stories from around the country, participating in hashtag games or spreading a false news story about a salmonella outbreak in turkeys around the Thanksgiving season of 2015.

The largest and most active group overall were the Right Trolls, which typically had little profile information but featured photos the researchers described as "young, attractive women." They collectively had nearly a million followers, the researchers said.

The Right Trolls pounced on the Sept. 11 stumble by Clinton to tweet at a frenetic pace for several days. They experimented with a variety of related hashtags, such as #HillarySickAtGroundZero, #ClintonCollapse and #ZombieHillary before eventually focusing on #HillarysHealth and #SickHillary, tweeting these hundreds of times.

This theme flowed into several more days of intensive tweeting about bombings in the New York area that injured dozens of people, stoking fears of terrorism.

When one group of accounts was tweeting at a rapid pace, others often posted less frequently or stopped entirely, underscoring the Clemson researchers' conclusion that a single team was taking turns operating various accounts. The trolls also probably used some forms of automation to manage multiple accounts simultaneously and tweet with a speed impractical for humans, the researchers said.

Dan Keating contributed to this report.

Kushner Lawyer Accepts Service Of Russia Suit By DNC After Delay

By Erik Larson

[Bloomberg News](#), July 20, 2018

Soon after a New York federal judge said formal delivery of a lawsuit isn't a "game," Jared Kushner's lawyer agreed to accept service of the Democratic National Committee's April complaint accusing him of colluding with Russia to meddle in the 2016 election.

Attorney Abbe Lowell affirmed on July 18 he'd accept service of the complaint that was filed in April against President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, after the DNC failed repeatedly to deliver the document to Kushner's homes in Manhattan and Washington, the DNC said Thursday in a court filing.

The DNC said it was advised by Kushner's building staff in New York that he was rarely home or no longer lived there. In Washington, the process server was turned away by the U.S. Secret Service and told, "You're going to need to find another way to serve that," according to the filing.

DNC Loses Request to Serve Kushner With Russia Suit by Mail

In its filing, the DNC said it served all the defendants in the U.S., including Kushner, the Trump Campaign, Roger Stone, Donald Trump Jr., George Papadopoulos, Paul Manafort, Richard Gates and Emin Agalarov.

The DNC suit, which names foreign defendants including Russia, WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, claims hacks of its computers inflicted "profound damage" on the party by undermining its effort to communicate "values and vision" and by creating internal discord.

Top Intel Official Says He Meant No Disrespect To Trump

By Zeke Miller

[Associated Press](#), July 21, 2018

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — The top U.S. intelligence official said Saturday he meant no disrespect to President Donald Trump in a televised interview discussing the summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said his Thursday comments at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado were not intended to be critical of the president's decision to invite Putin to a meeting in Washington later this year.

"Some press coverage has mischaracterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me during a live interview," Coats said. "My admittedly

awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president."

Coats has been under scrutiny since he said he wished Trump had not met one-on-one with the Russian leader and expressed dismay that the president had publicly undermined U.S. intelligence agencies.

Coats issued a rare statement rebutting the president's Monday comments during a press conference with Putin doubting the findings of the intelligence community on Russian election interference. White House aides were fearful that the former lawmaker might resign over the president's comments, and the president spoke positively of Coats in a television interview Wednesday. But Coats' display of surprise upon learning that Trump had invited Putin to Washington this fall for a follow-on meeting drew the president's ire.

"Say that again," Coats said, cupping his hand over his ear on live television. He took a deep breath and continued: "OK. That's going to be special."

Coats also revealed in the interview with NBC's Andrea Mitchell that he was unaware of what transpired in the private meeting between Trump and Putin in Helsinki, and restated without equivocation his belief that Russia continues to pose a threat to the American electoral system.

"Basically, they are the ones that are trying to undermine our basic values and divide with our allies," Coats said of Russia. "They are the ones who are trying to wreak havoc over our election process."

Coats, who oversees the nation's 17 intelligence agencies, also said that if he had been asked, he would have advised Trump against meeting Putin alone, with just interpreters.

"That's not my role. That's not my job. It is what it is," Coats said.

The statement Saturday from Coats, more than 48 hours after the initial interview, capped a week of public walk backs by the Trump administration relating to Russia.

Trump's public doubting of Russia's culpability for interference in 2016 — though he later tried to "clarify" his remarks a day later — sparked bipartisan condemnation in Washington and sparked congressional lawmakers to look once again for ways to tighten sanctions on the longtime U.S. foe.

Coats, a former GOP senator from Indiana, has until this week been a largely invisible figure in Trump's Cabinet. Earlier in the administration, his voice was drowned out by the more outspoken Mike Pompeo, who was CIA director before Trump tapped him as secretary of state. Now with Pompeo heading the State

Department, Coats has been thrust into the limelight as the voice of the intelligence community.

Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann contributed from Aspen, Colorado.

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Dan Coats Denies Criticism Of Trump Over Putin White House Visit

By Emily Cochrane

[New York Times](#), July 21, 2018

The nation's top intelligence official played down on Saturday his seemingly astonished reaction this week to the news that President Trump planned to invite President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to Washington.

"My admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president," the director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, said in a statement.

Mr. Coats appeared genuinely surprised on Thursday when he learned of the president's intention to welcome Mr. Putin to the White House during a national security conference in Aspen, Colo. Upon hearing the news, he turned to the televised event's moderator, Andrea Mitchell of NBC, asking, "Say that again?"

"O.K.," he added, drawing the word out. "That is going to be special."

In his statement, Mr. Coats also laid blame on the news media. "Some press coverage has mischaracterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me during a live interview," he said.

Diplomats and career officials have scrambled to understand what exactly transpired between Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin during their private meeting on Monday in Helsinki, Finland, and Mr. Coats had seemed taken aback by the prospect of another one-on-one encounter. He said he planned to warn the president of the dangers of such a meeting — something he did not walk back in his statement.

"If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way," Mr. Coats said on Thursday during the conference. "But that's not my role; that's not my job. So, it is what it is."

Since the Helsinki summit meeting, Mr. Coats has stepped in to publicly defend the conclusion by intelligence agencies that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, openly contradicting Mr. Trump and his extraordinary comments on Monday in which the president challenged that assessment while standing

next to Mr. Putin. Mr. Coats's reaction on Thursday underscored the growing divide between the president and his intelligence officials in their approach to Russia policy.

That rift has prompted speculation in Washington that Mr. Coats could step down or be fired.

U.S. Intelligence Chief Coats Says No Disrespect Intended Toward Trump Over Russia Summit News

By Steve Holland

[Reuters](#), July 21, 2018

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Intel Head Says He Did Not Intend To Criticize Trump

By Jacqueline Thomsen

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said on Saturday that he did not mean to disrespect President Trump with his reaction during a recent interview to the news that Russian President Vladimir Putin had been invited to the White House.

Coats, speaking at the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday, was visibly surprised when NBC's Andrea Mitchell told him that Putin had been invited to Washington, D.C., for a second meeting this fall.

"Some press coverage has mis-characterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me during a live interview. My admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president," Coats said in a statement.

"I and the entire intell[igence] community are committed to providing the best possible intelligence to inform and support President Trump's ongoing efforts to prevent Russian meddling in our upcoming elections, to build strong relationships internationally in order to maintain peace, denuclearize dangerous regimes and protect our nation and our allies," he continued.

Coats' reaction to the news made headlines, as it appeared that he had no prior knowledge of the meeting.

"Say that again?" Coats replied to the news, laughing.

"Did I hear you right?" he joked. "OK, that's gonna be special."

White House advisers were reportedly upset by Coats' appearance at the security forum, and feared that Trump would view his intelligence director's comments as a personal betrayal.

Coats: 'Awkward' Response To New Trump-Putin Summit Not Meant To Be 'Disrespectful'

By Quint Forgey

[Politico](#), July 21, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats on Saturday said his "awkward" response to the news that the Trump administration had extended an offer to Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Washington was not meant to "be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president."

"Some press coverage has mis-characterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me during a live interview," Coats said in a statement. "My admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president."

Coats was being interviewed onstage at the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday when NBC News' Andrea Mitchell informed him President Donald Trump had asked his national security adviser, John Bolton, to invite Putin to visit the nation's capital later this year. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders made the announcement on Twitter earlier that day.

"Say that again?" Coats replied, to laughter from the audience.

"That's gonna be special," he quipped.

Coats' impromptu reaction capped several days of tension between the president and the intelligence community following Trump and Putin's summit in Helsinki on Monday.

At a joint news conference that followed the leaders' meeting, Trump equivocated on whether Russia meddled in the 2016 election — even though Coats and multiple U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that the Kremlin did interfere. Coats then issued a statement reiterating the American intelligence community's findings.

But the national intelligence director struck a more deferential tone in his Saturday statement.

"I and the entire intel(ligence) community are committed to providing the best possible intelligence to inform and support President Trump's ongoing efforts to prevent Russian meddling in our upcoming elections, to build strong relationships internationally in order to maintain peace, denuclearize dangerous regimes and protect our nation and our allies," he added.

Dan Coats: 'Admittedly Awkward' Comments On Helsinki Summit Not Criticism Of Trump

By Joshua Caplan

[Breitbart](#), July 21, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats on Saturday sought to clarify critical remarks he made this week about President Donald Trump inviting Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit the White House this fall.

During a fireside chat at the Aspen Security Forum Thursday, Coats was left confounded after NBC anchor Andrea Mitchell first notified him of Putin receiving an invitation to Washington, D.C. "Say that again," Coats said, cupping his hand over his ear on live television. He took a deep breath and continued: "OK. That's going to be special."

"Say that again?!"

"Ooookay."

"That's gonna be special."

On the #AspenSecurity stage, DNI Dan Coats reacts in realtime to news that Vladimir Putin will visit the White House. pic.twitter.com/aGeeBJ8k4d

— The Aspen Institute (@AspenInstitute) July 19, 2018

Coats also revealed in the interview with Mitchell that he was unaware of what transpired in the private meeting between President Trump and Putin in Helsinki, and restated without equivocation his belief that Russia continues to pose a threat to the American electoral system. "Basically, they are the ones that are trying to undermine our basic values and divide with our allies," Coats said of Russia. "They are the ones who are trying to wreak havoc over our election process."

Coats, who oversees the nation's 17 intelligence agencies, also said that if he had been asked, he would have advised President Trump against meeting Putin alone, with just interpreters. "That's not my role. That's not my job. It is what it is," he said.

Walking back his statements about President Trump, Coats said they were not intended to be critical of the decision to invite Putin to a meeting in Washington later this year. "Some press coverage has mischaracterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me during a live interview," Coats said. "My admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president."

"I and the entire intel(ligence) community are committed to providing the best possible intelligence to inform and support President Trump's ongoing efforts to prevent Russian meddling in our upcoming elections, to build strong relationships internationally in order to maintain peace, denuclearize dangerous regimes and protect our nation and our allies," Coats added. The statement does not include a formal apology to President Trump.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Coats Walks Back Aspen Remarks On Trump-Putin Summit Saying He Supports The President

By Vandana Rambaran
[Daily Caller](#), July 21, 2018

U.S. Director of Intelligence Dan Coats said his “awkward response” to news that President Donald Trump was planning a second summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin was in no way meant to “disrespect or criticize the actions of the president.”

While taking questions at the Aspen Institute in Colorado for the Aspen Security Forum on Thursday, Coats was informed by NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell that Trump had invited Putin to the White House.

“Say that again,” Coats responded, laughing. “Did I hear you? OK, that’s going to be special.”

Coats walked back his remarks in a statement issued Saturday.

“Some press coverage has mis-characterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me during a live interview. My admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president,” Coats said.

“I and the entire intel community are committed to providing the best possible intelligence to inform and support President Trump’s ongoing efforts to prevent Russian meddling in our upcoming elections, to build strong relationships internationally in order to maintain peace, denuclearize dangerous regimes and protect our nation and our allies.”

Trump has been under fire since his meeting with Putin in Helsinki on Monday, where he cast doubt on U.S. intelligence officials who believe that Russia meddled in the 2016 presidential elections.

“People came to me, Dan Coats came to me, and some others — they said they think it’s Russia,” Trump said during the joint press conference with Putin on Monday. “I have president Putin, he just said it’s not Russia. I will say this, I don’t see any reason why it would be.”

After intense backlash for his comment, Trump later insisted he misspoke, saying instead he had no reason to believe “it wouldn’t be Russia” who interfered, he said Tuesday.

“Obviously I wished he had made a different statement, but I think that now that has been clarified, based on his late reactions to this, and so I don’t think I want to go any further than that,” Coats, who was in Aspen as the Helsinki visit was taking place, said regarding Trump’s remarks.

Dan Coats Downplays Reaction To Trump’s Putin Invite As “awkward”

By Emily Stewart
[Vox](#), July 22, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats is trying to downplay his surprised reaction to the news that President Donald Trump plans to invite Russian President Vladimir Putin to the White House in the fall. He says his “awkward response” wasn’t meant to be critical of the president, who is continuing to face the fallout over his performance at Monday’s Helsinki summit.

He released a statement Saturday addressing his earlier remarks, capping off what’s been a weird week for Trump and Coats all around.

During a Monday press conference with Putin, Trump seemed to indicate he believed Putin’s denials of Russian meddling in the 2016 election over the United States intelligence community’s evidenced-based assertions that Russia interfered. Hours later, Coats released a statement contradicting the president, saying the intelligence community has been “clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election.”

After bipartisan outrage over Trump’s performance at the press conference, the president on Tuesday claimed he misspoke when he told reporters, “I don’t see any reason why it would be [Russia]” who meddled in the 2016 election. Trump said he what he meant to say is he didn’t see why it wouldn’t have been Russia.

But that didn’t end the Trump-Coats miscommunication.

On Wednesday, Trump again cast doubt on the broad consensus within the US intelligence community that Russia is still meddling in US politics. When asked by a reporter whether he thought Russia was still targeting the US, he responded with a simple, “No.” Hours later, the White House reversed course — Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters that Trump was actually saying he didn’t want to answer questions.

During a Q&A session with NBC News reporter Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security Forum the following day, Coats admitted he doesn’t “know what happened in that meeting” between Trump and Putin, and he was caught by surprise by Trump inviting Putin to Washington. When Mitchell told him about it, he replied, laughing, “Say that again.”

Per Saturday’s statement, it looks like Coats is trying to smooth things over with the president. “Some press coverage has mischaracterized my intentions in responding to breaking news presented to me in a live interview,” he said. “My admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the

actions of the President.” Trump’s still not getting rave reviews over the Helsinki summit

The criticism of Trump’s performance at the Helsinki summit and press conference continued into the weekend, despite the White House’s efforts to change the subject.

On Sunday, Susan Rice, former national security adviser under the Obama administration, said in an appearance on ABC’s *This Week* with George Stephanopoulos that it was a “historic mistake” for Trump to sit down with Putin by himself. She lamented Trump’s “tragic display of sycophancy” at the press conference, “where the president called into question yet again, standing next to Vladimir Putin, a dictator, the integrity of our intelligence community.”

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) on CBS’s *Face the Nation* with Margaret Brennan said the White House’s mixed messaging on Russia this week was “not a good moment for the administration.”

Tom Bossert, who was Trump’s homeland security adviser before he was ousted in the spring, gave a more forgiving assessment also on *This Week*: He said he believes Trump’s meeting with Putin in private was “productive.” He also weighed in on the Coats debacle, saying coverage of his reaction to the Putin-comes-to-Washington news was “overblown” and he was simply being “light-hearted.”

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee, appeared alongside Bossert on *This Week* and offered a harsher point of view.

“I would agree with Tom that the talks in Helsinki were productive, but they were productive for Vladimir Putin,” he said. “The reality is we have no idea what this president, our president, agreed to.”

And he said Coats being kept out of the loop isn’t his fault. “The failing is that the president hasn’t even described to his own intelligence chief what he might have agreed to in that private two-hour meeting,” he said.

The ‘deep State’ Strikes Back — Gently

By Aaron Blake

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

If actions speak louder than words, Daniel Coats’s actions practically screamed.

When NBC News’s Andrea Mitchell informed the director of national intelligence there was news from the White House on Twitter, Coats could not help himself. He turned to the side and gave a startled look. When Mitchell delivered the news — that the White House had invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to Washington

— Coats leaned in as if he did not trust his ears. “Say that again?”

It appeared all in good fun, but Coats was clearly only half-joking, if not 25 percent joking. Over the course of the interview, he rather diplomatically made it obvious he was not happy with President Trump’s conduct alongside Putin at their summit in Helsinki. (“If he had asked me how that ought to be conducted, I would have suggested a different way,” Coats said. “But that’s not my role; that’s not my job. So it is what it is.”) But it was also remarkably unplugged for a button-down former senator, who some of his old colleagues have likened to Mister Rogers.

It was also only the latest example of an administration official charged with combating foreign influence in the United States steeling their spines and sending signals about standing up to Trump — or at least working around him.

At the same Aspen Security Forum where Coats made his displeasure known, FBI Director Christopher A. Wray earlier in the week hinted he has considered resigning. Asked about such reports, Wray leaned into it. “I’m a low-key, understated guy, but that should not be mistaken for what my spine is made out of,” Wray said. “I’ll just leave it at that.”

Perhaps the most notable recent example of this is Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, who has responded to Trump’s bullying and attacks on the Russia investigation Rosenstein oversees by increasingly adopting a confrontational approach. Rosenstein has recently hit back at Trump’s Republican defenders in the House, including a curt retort that seemed to shut down Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) at a hearing last month. Then, in Aspen on Thursday, Rosenstein announced a new Justice Department policy to publicly disclose foreign interference in real time.

Trump probably will not like the upshot of those disclosures. Given pretty much everyone except Trump has acknowledged Russia is still interfering and will almost undoubtedly do so in the 2018 election, the interference Trump strongly prefers to pretend does not exist could come up at regular intervals. Trump is not on the ballot, but frequent reminders of American democracy being under attack by Russia could make it more difficult for him to continue to play the whole thing off as a sideshow.

None of these represent these officials going “rogue,” as some in the White House would like to portray Coats’s appearance. (It is much more subtle than that.) But while congressional Republicans dance around criticizing a president who controls their base, some Trump-appointed officials charged with a higher duty than partisan politics seem to be doing what they

can, around the edges, to cope with Trump making their jobs much more difficult. The confluence of Trump's Putin summit and the forum in Aspen laid that bare.

Dan Coats Showed What Working For Trump Means: The Doctrine Of Constant Surprises

By Dan Balz

[Washington Post](#), July 21, 2018

There are times when even the most senior of government officials let the mask of responsibility slip and show that they are also human beings capable of normal reactions to unexpected events. How else to explain the response by Daniel Coats, the director of national intelligence, the instant he heard that President Trump had invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to meet in Washington this fall?

Coats was caught so off guard when NBC's Andrea Mitchell reported the news in the middle of a televised interview at the Aspen Security Forum that he did what much of the rest of the world did at that moment, responding with a startled, "Say that again?" There was no effort to hide the fact that he was as much in the dark as anyone outside of government. "Did I hear you right?" he said with a laugh, and to much laughter from the audience. And then this about the possible meeting: "That's going to be special."

This was a moment of levity, but for all the wrong reasons. That the nation's highest intelligence official did not know that an invitation to Putin, a foreign adversary, was in the works only highlighted the apparent dysfunction of the government on the most sensitive of matters. Coats's reaction summed up a week in which — not for the first time — there were worrisome questions raised about the capacity of the administration, and especially the White House, to function effectively on behalf of the country.

From start to present, the meeting between Trump and Putin has produced one head-shaking statement after another, leaving experts inside government to scramble and the world at large to puzzle over exactly what happened during the time the two leaders were together. It has been a nonstop example of a president operating at cross purposes with his staff and some officials operating in ignorance.

Recall that, ahead of the Trump-Putin session, expectations were dampened by the administration. Jon Huntsman, the U.S. ambassador to Russia, explained that this event was not to be seen as a summit, but only as a "meeting." The president was equally low-key in describing the get-together. He said there was no particular agenda for Helsinki, that it would be a "loose

meeting" and that his goal was really just to get to know Putin better. He told CBS News anchor Jeff Glor, "I go in with low expectations."

But after Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel overseeing the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, filed the indictments of 12 Russian military intelligence officers on July 13, while Trump was in London cleaning up a small mess from an interview in which he was critical of British Prime Minister Theresa May, the "loose meeting" suddenly had a focus — and certainly not one the president appreciated.

Still, the impact hardly penetrated his consciousness, or so it seemed when CBS's Glor asked whether Trump would press Putin to hand over the 12 indicted officers. "Well, I might," he replied, adding, "I hadn't really thought of that."

The Helsinki news conference spoke for itself, and the after-action critiques of the president tended to be brutal. He and Putin had met for two hours, joined only by their translators. In public, the president declined to criticize the Russians for interference and indicated that he agreed more with Putin's denial than the conclusion of U.S. intelligence of nefarious Russian actions in 2016.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) called it "one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory." George Shultz, who was secretary of state in the Reagan administration, told the San Francisco Chronicle that he agreed with McCain's assessment.

For Trump, things did not get better, or clearer, quickly. The presidential walk-back of his news conference performance was slow to happen, grudgingly delivered and awkward in its ultimate messaging. He said he accepted the intelligence community's conclusion that the Russians interfered in 2016, and then went off script to add, "Could be other people also; there's a lot of people out there." Which is not exactly what the intelligence community said.

The next morning, there was another uproar when Trump responded "no" to a question about whether he believed, as Coats had said the previous week, that the Russians were continuing to target the U.S. election system. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders later said he was saying no to more questions at the photo op.

Those were not the only confusing aspects of the post-summit news. After the two leaders left Helsinki, the Russians indicated that the meeting had produced some important agreements. Exactly what was or wasn't agreed to by Trump and Putin remains a mystery. Other officials were hard-pressed to explain what Putin might be talking about or why the president had labeled a low-expectations meeting with no particular agenda such a

success. When Coats was asked by Mitchell whether he knew what transpired during the two-hour one-on-one between the two leaders, he said no.

Adding to the mystery, the president tweeted after arriving back in the United States, "While the NATO meeting in Brussels was an acknowledged triumph, with billions of dollars more being put up by member countries at a faster pace, the meeting with Russia may prove to be, in the long run, an even greater success. Many positive things will come out of that meeting." Of course, that came around the same time that Trump, in an interview with Tucker Carlson of Fox News, called into question the U.S. commitment to NATO's Article 5, the requirement to joint defense of any member that comes under attack by another country.

There was also the bizarre handling of Putin's cynical "offer" to invite U.S. and Russian officials to cooperate by coming to Russia to interview the indicted military officers. This also included a call by the Russians to interview, or interrogate, some U.S. officials who the Russians claim have interfered in their country, including Michael McFaul, the former ambassador to Russia.

When Putin mentioned this at the news conference, Trump responded by saying, "He offered to have the people working on the case come and work with their investigators with respect to the 12 people. I think that's an incredible offer."

Sanders was later pressed about this by reporters when everyone was back in Washington. "The president is going to meet with his team, and we'll let you know when we have an announcement on that," she replied, making it sound as though the "offer" were being treated seriously. Meanwhile, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert was calling the idea "absolutely absurd."

On Thursday, the Senate went on record, 98 to 0, against any such exchange. Minutes earlier, Sanders issued a statement in an effort to clear it up, though even that statement was worded in a way that seemed designed to give least offense to Putin. "It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin," her statement said, "but President Trump disagrees with it. Hopefully President Putin will have the 12 identified Russians come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt."

McFaul, for the record, does not regard the offer as having been made "in sincerity" and believes it would be desirable for the administration to be far more forceful in warning that such efforts by the Russians will do serious damage to the relationship between the two countries.

The story continues. Still pending is the proposed autumn visit to Washington by the Russian president, coming in the closing weeks of one of the most consequential midterm elections in memory. What

process produced this invitation? It came, seemingly, even before there could be a full assessment of what happened in Helsinki and probably with no time for the president's national security team to weigh the pros and cons of Trump's desire for a second meeting.

Last Monday, Coats was quick to respond after the president's Helsinki comments, making clear he stood by the findings of the intelligence community and would continue to provide the president with unvarnished assessments. His comments to Mitchell in Aspen, Colo., on Thursday, beyond his reactions to the invitation to Putin to come to Washington, highlighted a willingness to disagree publicly but politely with the president while trying to remain true to his pledge to serve the country. He is not alone.

That is one more measure of these times, of a president and executive branch officials operating on separate tracks and a White House staff struggling to constrain a president determined to make his own rules, whatever his advisers might think.

Former National Intelligence Director Discusses Dan Coats' Current Situation : NPR

[NPR](#), July 20, 2018

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats has been repeatedly put on the spot by President Trump's actions in Helsinki and at home. NPR's Ailsa Chang speaks with former director John Negroponte about how he might navigate the situation.

AILSAL CHANG, HOST:

It has been a dizzying week for the United States intelligence community. It began with President Trump doubting the findings of the U.S. intelligence agencies about Russian interference in the 2016 election, statements he later walked back. And as the week came to a close, the man responsible for coordinating all U.S. intelligence agencies got some surprising news. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats learned the president was planning a Washington summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin only after NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell informed him.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

ANDREA MITCHELL: We have some breaking news. The White House has announced on Twitter that Vladimir Putin is coming to the White House in the fall.

DAN COATS: Say that again.

(LAUGHTER)

MITCHELL: You – Vladimir Putin coming to the...

COATS: Did I hear you – did I hear you...

MITCHELL: Yeah. Yeah.

COATS: OK.

MITCHELL: Yeah.

(LAUGHTER)

COATS: That's going to be special.

(LAUGHTER)

CHANG: All right, so to put all of this into context we're joined by Ambassador John Negroponte, the first director of national intelligence. Welcome, Ambassador.

JOHN NEGROPONTE: Thank you very much.

CHANG: So how unusual is it for the DNI to learn about something like that from a reporter?

NEGROPONTE: Well, I think it's pretty unusual because usually in the run-up to an announcement like that there would have been I suppose at least a National Security Council meeting. And the director of national intelligence is a member of that council, so...

CHANG: Right.

NEGROPONTE: ...He would have learned about it beforehand.

CHANG: You know, this week, not only did Andrea Mitchell have to be the one to inform Director Coats that there was this upcoming summit at the White House between Trump and Putin, but there were other pieces of information it seemed the White House did not give to Coats like what Trump and Putin talked about in Helsinki, whether any agreements were made between the two of them. How does that affect the ability of the DNI to lead all the intelligence agencies in the country when the White House doesn't seem to be giving that person important pieces of information?

NEGROPONTE: Well, I think Mr. Coats was probably not the only high-ranking national security official to be kept in the dark. And I think that's more a commentary on the way the president is conducting his presidency than it is a reflection on the DNI himself. Secondly, I think we got to make a distinction between information on the one hand and policy decisions on the other.

And Mr. Coats I don't think is in any way impeded from continuing to collect and analyze information that is important for our nation's leaders. But the president, he's kind of neglected the National Security Council process as we have understood it in the past. It's episodes like this that demonstrate the shortcomings of such an approach because it's making some of his key advisers look as if they're in the dark.

CHANG: A lot of people have suggested that Coats should resign not only because of yesterday but because of statements the president made about Russian interference earlier in the week. Where would you come down on that question if you were in his shoes?

NEGROPONTE: I hope he doesn't resign, first of all. I think he's performing a very useful service to our

nation. And when congressmen and senators comment about the qualities desired of a director of national intelligence or a head of an intelligence agency, they talk about the willingness to speak truth to power. I think Mr. Coats is embodying that virtue in the way he has behaved. And I think frankly, it would be a great pity if he were to leave. I think he should stick with it and keep doing his job.

CHANG: But you think that Coats can remain effective in this position even if the president chooses not to tell him some important pieces of information once in a while and even if the public perceives that, that Coats is sometimes left out of the loop by the White House.

NEGROPONTE: Look; any more than the secretary of state when he's not necessarily in the loop or the secretary of defense, his responsibility is to coordinate the intelligence community and make sure that it works in the most effective way possible.

CHANG: Can he do that?

NEGROPONTE: Well, I think he's got as good an ability as anybody else to do it. I think if there's a shortcoming, it's on the president's side, not on Mr. Coats' side.

CHANG: Ambassador John Negroponte was the first director of national intelligence. Thank you very much.

NEGROPONTE: You're welcome.

Helsinki Aftershocks Jolt US Security Elite

[BBC World News \(UK\)](#), July 20, 2018

For a few days in July, a slice of America's national security elite decamps to the Rocky Mountains.

The dress code at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado is strictly casual – a tie would probably get you ejected.

"Summer camp for nerds" was how one participant jokingly described it.

This year a forest fire made the flight up to the town – at 8,000ft (2,400m) above sea level – even more dramatic than usual.

You could smell the smoke as flights made their way in to land at the small airport. And the political setting for this year's forum was as striking and combustible as the scenery.

At the start of the week, President Donald Trump appeared to side with President Vladimir Putin against his own intelligence community over their assessment that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election.

That day, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats issued a statement saying the intelligence community stood by its original conclusions. A number of Republicans who had been supportive of the president –

and some commentators on FOX News – vocally expressed their concerns.

The next day, President Trump made an awkward retraction of his original claim in front of the cameras (described by some as a “hostage video” because it looked like he had been coerced into making the statement).

Media playback is unsupported on your device

Media caption Trump says he “misspoke” at Putin summit, but is it too late? Anthony Zurcher explains

The day after that retraction, Aspen Security Forum opened with the FBI director on stage and the aftershocks of Helsinki still being felt.

“My view has not changed, which is that Russia attempted to interfere with the last election and that it continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day,” said Christopher Wray.

The FBI was involved in a huge range of activities around the country, he said, but acknowledged that the Washington political drama was what people were focused on.

Other officials have been asked the same question about whether they agreed with the US intelligence assessment, with journalists and participants parsing each word to see how much distance they might be willing to put between themselves and the White House.

Some political appointees have been more cautious than others and there have also been voices of support for elements of Trump’s foreign policy over Iran, China and challenging Nato allies over their spending.

Mr Wray took over from James Comey as FBI boss in August 2017

One of the questions posed to serving officials has been, “Have you thought about resigning?” or “What would it take to make you do that?”

“I’m a low-key, understated guy, but that should not be mistaken for what my spine is made out of. I’ll just leave it at that,” Mr Wray answered, when pressed on whether he had come close to doing so.

One dramatic moment came when Mr Coats appeared.

The man whose job it was to know America’s secrets had already admitted he did not know all the details of what had been discussed by the two leaders in Helsinki.

If he had had the opportunity, he said he would have recommended other people be in the room. (Was it possible that Mr Putin recorded the meeting? It’s a risk, he replied).

Then the person interviewing Mr Coats was passed a note saying the White House had just said that President Putin had now been invited to Washington.

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Media caption Dan Coats reacts to Putin visit news: ‘That’s going to be special...’

“Say that again?” said Mr Coats to laughter, before adding, “That’s going to be special.” It reinforced the sense of distance between some of those here at Aspen and the president they serve.

One former intelligence officer commented that there almost seems to be two governments – the president (and his tweets) and then the professionals carrying on their work.

But no one wants to say how sustainable that dichotomy might be. One thing foreign officials attending the forum said was that this divide left them confused as to which signals they were supposed to take seriously.

When Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein took to the stage, he was granted a standing ovation by large sections of the crowd (which included members of the public for his and some other talks).

“It is nice to get out of Washington,” the official responded.

Media playback is unsupported on your device

Media caption The Soviet Spy Scandal: When Britain expelled 90 Soviet diplomats

The reason for the response from the audience was that Mr Rosenstein is the man who indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers for election interference less than a week earlier, and he has the job of overseeing and (to some extent protecting) Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation of possible collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign.

He also announced that in future the public would be notified if foreign attempts to interfere in elections were uncovered. The question about whether more could have been done in 2016 and why it was not is one that has repeatedly come up – with some officials from the Obama administration conceding that they had not fully appreciated what had happened at the time.

The agenda of the forum reflects current preoccupations. This time, that means Russia and cyber (and sometimes both together). One of the interesting shifts is the relative lack of emphasis on terrorism which has dominated American national security thinking since the September 11th attacks.

Other key messages were a constant warning that even though much of the current focus is on Russia, China remains the greatest challenge for US national security – including in its ability to exert economic and covert influence in America and around the world.

Officials will say they fear the focus on Russia leads to the risk that China and other challenges are overlooked. However, for the moment the dramas around the president’s relationship with Russia remain centre-stage as those who deal with America’s security

grapple with an increasingly unfamiliar world at home as well as abroad.

Colbert Has A Snaky Name For White House's Putin Invitation: 'Titanic 2: Here We Go Again'

By Jayme Deerwester

[USA Today](#), July 20, 2018

"Folks, it's hard to imagine you could be this shocked every day by the Trump administration. I mean, freshly shocked," "Late Show" host Stephen Colbert in his monologue, which focused on the news that President Trump has invited Vladimir Putin to visit the White House less than a week after publicly taking Russia's word that they didn't interfere in the 2016 election over that of his own intelligence agencies.

He surmised, "I think it's because every day, they attach the electrodes to a different part of us. And let's just say that today, they had to shave us first just to get contact."

After all, Colbert said, "Americans of every political stripe have been horrified by Trump's Helsinki Helsucking, where Putin was playing chess while Trump was eating his won checkers," Stephen Colbert said Thursday. "And everybody around Trump has spent this whole week trying to put distance between Trump and Putin so this whole sordid thing could be behind us and we could go back to the people's business of caging toddlers."

"But today Trump tweeted that, 'The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media. I look forward to our second meeting.'"

Cue the spit take.

"Second meeting?!?" the "Late Show" host exclaimed. "Second meeting? Because the first one went so well? It's just like the exciting sequel coming out this summer: 'Titanic 2! Here We Go Again!' This time, it ends well."

Colbert tried not to assume the worst. "That's kind of vague. Second meeting, could happen. After all, he mused, "Where would he even meet with a universally condemned, war criminal strong man who personally ordered the attack on our election?"

A second spit taker followed a clip of CNN reporting that press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders had tweeted that the president had asked national security adviser John Bolton to invite Putin to Washington this fall.

"He's inviting him to Washington?!?" Then addressing Trump, Colbert said, "Nothing could have gone worse than your meeting in Helsinki. It

embarrassed our country. It enraged our allies. It strongly reinforced the idea that Putin's got something on you. And it's the first time your party has turned against you even a little."

He observed, "This meeting is really going to be a tough one for director of national intelligence and demise Dan Coats. Now you remember, Trump threw Coats and his intelligence agencies to side with Putin, so it's hard to imagine the look on his face when he heard about this ... Luckily, you don't have to imagine it because he was giving a live interview when it broke."

He cut to a clip of Coats, the man tasked with knowing everything about this country's secrets, finding out about the visit from a reporter and then asked, "Dan, would you like to borrow my mug?"

Distinguished Pol Of The Week: Starting A Candor Trend?

By Jennifer Rubin

[Washington Post](#), July 22, 2018

The Post reported this past week on how the director of national intelligence learned President Trump had invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to the White House:

As the late afternoon tweet landed, Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats was on stage at the Aspen Security Forum in the middle of an interview with NBC's Andrea Mitchell, who broke the news to him. Coats, clearly surprised, took a deep breath.

"Say that again," he said. "Did I hear you?"

She repeated the news.

"Okaaaay," Coats said. "That's going to be special."

Coats went even further, essentially saying he didn't trust his boss to be alone with Putin. (The Post reported: "Underscoring how little is known about the meeting, Coats acknowledged that he has not been told what happened in the room. Asked whether it was possible Putin had secretly recorded the more-than-two-hour meeting, Coats answered, 'That risk is always there.'") He went on, criticizing the president's statements seeming to side with Putin ("I wish he had made a different statement") and blasting the notion that there was any doubt about Moscow's culpability. ("It's undeniable that the Russians are taking the lead on this. They are the ones that are trying to undermine our basic values. We need to make sure that we call them out on this, that they are not able to make sure they can do this in elections coming up." The White House, as is customary, was perturbed by the sight of an honest, conscientious public servant. The Post reported:

Inside the White House, Trump's advisers were in an uproar over Coats's interview in Aspen, Colo. They said the optics were especially damaging, noting that at moments Coats appeared to be laughing at the president, playing to his audience of the intellectual elite in a manner that was sure to infuriate Trump. "Coats has gone rogue," said one senior White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide a candid assessment.

And thank goodness he has. The spectacle of a president striking an alliance with an enemy — surely Russia is in that category — against his own intelligence community deserves nothing less than stern rebukes. Indeed, the real question remains: Why aren't Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, national security adviser John Bolton, CIA Director Gina Haspel and other senior officials doing the same?

As Republicans for the Rule of Law declared in the group's latest ads, there is no excuse for failing to defend American interests:

Coats should continue with his candor campaign, even at the risk of being fired. Indeed if he were canned, he might be even more candid. The American people and Congress need to understand fully the dangers created by a president acting in league with a foreign adversary.

For all of that, and with the fervent hope he continues with his outspokenness, we can say: Well done, Mr. Coats.

A Top Official Just Issued A Stark Warning About Russia. To This White House, He's 'gone Rogue.'

By Greg Sargent

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

THE MORNING PLUM:

White House advisers are in an "uproar" over an interview that Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats gave to NBC News on Thursday, according to reporting in The Post.

As well they should be. After all, Coats starkly warned that Russia is currently trying to "wreak havoc over our elections" — meaning Russia is trying to do this right now — and is working to "divide us" from our "allies." No wonder White House advisers are worked up — after all, Russia already got away with sabotaging our last election, and they're trying to do it again.

Okay, I'm kidding. Here's what really upset them about this Coats interview:

Inside the White House, [President] Trump's advisers were in an uproar over Coats's interview in Aspen, Colo. They said the optics were especially

damaging, noting that at moments Coats appeared to be laughing at the president, playing to his audience of the intellectual elite in a manner that was sure to infuriate Trump.

"Coats has gone rogue," said one senior White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide a candid assessment.

The director of national intelligence issued an extensive warning that Russia is again trying to corrupt U.S. democracy, and White House advisers are worried that Trump will be angered by his tone.

During that interview, Coats said a number of disturbing things. He said he doesn't "know what happened" during Trump's one-on-one meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday. He added that we must be "relentless" in terms of continuing to call out Russia's last round of electoral sabotage, and be "ever vigilant" about the possibility of more to come.

[Please, Dan Coats. Don't resign.]

The portion that might anger the president came when NBC's Andrea Mitchell surprised Coats by telling him that Trump had just announced that he had invited Putin to Washington this fall. "Say that again," Coats said. "Did I hear you?" She repeated it. Coats responded: "That's going to be special."

In fairness, it's not surprising that White House advisers might be upset about this because, even if Coats disagrees with the president, the expectation is understandably that senior officials will keep that concealed and won't embarrass the president about it. But what is particularly notable and revealing here is this notion that, in saying all these things, Coats has "gone rogue."

That's because Coats has, in fact, "gone rogue," in an important substantive sense. Coats is warning — as he has previously done — that the prospect of more Russian interference in our elections poses a serious threat, and he's doing so in a particularly attention grabbing way. Meanwhile, other officials are not treating this threat seriously enough. On Thursday, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said this about Russia and the 2016 election:

"I haven't seen any evidence that the attempts to interfere in our election infrastructure was to favor a particular political party."

Of course, the consensus view of the intelligence community is that Russia interfered to help Trump win. And the indictment from special counsel Robert S. Mueller III documented a sabotage plot of extraordinary scope, reach and ambition geared towards precisely that end. Nielsen did say it would be "foolish" to assume Russia won't interfere again, and said: "We've got to be prepared." But we all know Nielsen refrained from saying

Russia wanted Trump to win because it would anger Trump. And indeed, the president has continued to mostly deny that Russia interfered at all — including doing so while standing next to Putin — though Trump was briefed 18 months ago on intelligence showing that the Russian leader personally directed the plot.

So how prepared can Nielsen and the rest of the administration really be for another round of Russian sabotage if she feels constrained from publicly telling the full truth about the last round of it?

In this sense, Coats really has gone rogue — by taking the threat of future Russian interference more seriously, and sounding the alarm about it more loudly, than other officials do, the guy at the very top included.

* A TELLING EXCHANGE WITH COATS: By the way, this exchange between Mitchell and Coats, about Putin's meeting with Trump, is also notable:

Mitchell: Is there a risk that Vladimir Putin could have recorded it?

Coats: That risk is always there.

The director of national intelligence is floating the possibility that Putin has a recording of two hours of private Trump remarks to him. Max Bergmann, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, and who worked for six years at the State Department, engaging often with the DNI over intelligence sharing with allies, told me this could be more significant than we as yet understand.

"The clear implication of Coats' comment is that Putin might have greater lever leverage over Trump than we know," Bergmann said. "We're already seeing the Russians use what happened in that meeting to go to other European capitals to say, 'This is what was agreed to by President Trump.'" Bergmann added that the Russians "likely have a detailed record of that conversation," while "we're all in the dark."

* POLL: MAJORITY THINKS RUSSIA WILL SABOTAGE AGAIN: A new Daily Beast/Ipsos poll finds that 51 percent of Americans think Russia will interfere in the midterm elections, including 37 percent of Republicans. And:

Nearly half of the respondents (49 percent) said they agreed with assessments that Trump's performance at the summit could be described as "treasonous." That included 21 percent of Republican respondents.

It would have been interesting if the poll had asked whether respondents think Trump would welcome another round of sabotage.

* NEW PUTIN VISIT COULD SCRAMBLE MIDTERMS: Trump has invited Putin for a visit to Washington this fall, and the New York Times notes:

Beyond saying the meeting would be in the fall, the White House did not announce a date. That means Mr.

Trump could meet Mr. Putin again before the midterm elections, giving him a chance to redress the widespread criticism of how he handled the first meeting and possibly injecting further volatility into the campaigns.

Something tells us Trump's conduct towards Putin next time will only compound that criticism, not "redress" it. But there's little doubt it will roil the elections.

* GOP CONGRESSMAN: TRUMP 'MANIPULATED' BY RUSSIA: Rep. Will Hurd (R-Tex.) wrote an op ed excoriating Trump's embrace of Vladimir Putin:

Over the course of my career as an undercover officer in the C.I.A., I saw Russian intelligence manipulate many people. I never thought I would see the day when an American president would be one of them. . . by playing into Vladimir Putin's hands, [Trump] actively participated in a Russian disinformation campaign that legitimized Russian denial . . . I believe that lawmakers must fulfill our oversight duty as well as keep the American people informed of the current danger.

Yes, Trump is currently colluding with Russia, right there in plain sight.

* WORRIES RISE ABOUT MORE RUSSIAN SABOTAGE: The Associated Press reported this on the reaction in Congress to Trump's embrace of Putin:

Mixed messages from Trump have increased worries in Congress that the White House is not taking seriously the threat that senior officials say Russia now poses to the upcoming 2018 midterm elections. Democrats in the House sought Thursday to extend a state grant program for election security but were blocked by Republicans.

Hmm. Perhaps these "worries" are only arising on one side?

* KEEP AN EYE ON TENNESSEE: The Fix has updated its top 10 Senate races to watch, and importantly, the Tennessee Senate race is now seen as competitive:

Democrats have their best chance here in years with the retirement of Republican Sen. Bob Corker and their recruitment of a popular former governor, Phil Bredesen. Republicans like their top pick, too, Rep. Marsha Blackburn, who was recently the recipient of a coveted campaign rally visit from President Trump. But she's not getting much help from the current seat-holder: This spring, Corker praised Bredesen and then, when given the opportunity to clarify his statement, didn't really. Some polls show Bredesen with the lead, others Blackburn.

If Democrats do manage to pick up this seat, it makes a Democratic takeover of the Senate a bit more plausible, or if not, it could mitigate the damage if one or two red-state Democrats lose.

* TRUMP'S TRADE WAR ESCALATES: The President told CNBC's "Squawk Box" that he's ready to expand his tariffs so they hit \$500 billion worth of Chinese goods. Note this:

Trump also said he was told by unspecified Chinese officials that "nobody would ever complain" from past administrations "until you came along — me. They said, 'Now you're more than complaining. We don't like what you're doing.'"

The trade war has become so deeply entangled with Trump's megalomania, it is hard to see an end to it anytime soon.

* TRUMP TRADE WAR PUTS GOP CANDIDATES IN TOUGH SPOT: Axios reports that Trump's escalating trade war is threatening economic damage in states will competitive Senate races, putting GOP candidates in an awkward position:

Dan Coats: Once The Senate's 'Mister Rogers,' He's Now An Outspoken Voice Of Reason On Russian Meddling

By Kyle Swenson

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

The Kremlin was no fan of Daniel Coats.

It was March 2014 and relations between the United States and Russia were nose-diving. Earlier that year, Russian military forces had bashed into the Crimea, illegally annexing a portion of Ukraine in a geopolitical power grab denounced by western nations. In retaliation, the Obama administration ordered new economic sanctions. Firing back, the Kremlin announced a list of American officials banned from entering their country. The blacklisted Congress members including then-House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio), Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.), and Sen. Daniel Coats (R-Ind.), then a member of the Senate's Intelligence Committee urging a tough response against the Crimea incursion.

Coats — a well-respected longtime Washington fixture who was once referred to by a Senate colleague as the chamber's "Mister Rogers" — brushed off the Russian ban with a pinch of wry Midwestern humor.

"While I'm disappointed that I won't be able to go on vacation with my family in Siberia this summer, I am honored to be on this list," the Indiana senator said in a statement. The Washington Post reported at the time. "Putin's recent aggression is unacceptable, and America must join with our European allies to isolate and punish Russia."

Four years later, Coats, now director of national intelligence, is again pushing back against a Russian

agenda, a stance that has pitched him into conflict with his boss.

In the wake of President Trump's summit this week with Vladimir Putin, the White House has been engulfed in mixed messages, at best, about whether Trump believes Russian agents meddled in the 2016 election.

But amid the clashing voices, Coats has struck a clear, strong note. On Monday, following the president's controversial news conference with Putin in Helsinki, Coats responded with a statement saying the intelligence community has "been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling."

On Thursday during an interview with NBC's Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security Forum, Coats admitted he would have advised against the one-on-one meeting between Trump and Putin — but he had not been consulted. Coats also seemed dumbfounded by news the administration was planning to invite Putin to Washington in the fall.

"That's going to be special," Coats said to the laughter of the audience.

The comments this week underscore that Coats, as an in-house reality check to Trump regarding Russian interference, is increasingly at odds with Trump's own feelings. The collision between the administration's voice of reason and the volatile president has sparked speculation Coats may not be long for the administration.

Coats's situation is all the more precarious in that he sits atop the country's intelligence apparatus, the complex of more than a dozen agencies regularly blasted by Trump and his supporters as the "deep state."

The Indiana Republican has checked off a number of government roles in his decades-long public service career — including U.S. House member, senator, ambassador, and lobbyist.

A Michigan native, Coats served two years in the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers before arriving in Indiana for law school. In the 1970s, he went to work for then-Rep. Dan Quayle (R-Ind), following the future Vice President's footsteps to Washington. In 1980, Coats won Quayle's House district; when Quayle shifted to the White House in 1988, Coats was appointed to fill his Senate seat. He was then elected on his own, serving until 1999.

During the George W. Bush administration, Coats was appointed U.S. ambassador to Germany, taking up the post weeks before the September 11 attacks launched the global war on terror. In May 2004, Coats was tasked with one of the touchier bits of foreign diplomacy related to those wide-reaching conflicts. As The Post's Dana Priest reported in 2005, the ambassador was dispatched to explain to German

authorities American intelligence agents had wrongfully imprisoned a German national in a covert action. Coats had to urge the Germans to keep the situation quiet, to keep other operations from being exposed.

Coats was reelected to the Senate in 2010, where he established himself as a social and fiscal conservative — his “Waste of the Week” speeches from the chamber floor highlighted profligate government spending. But Coats’s low-key manner also inspired bipartisan respect, particularly with his work on the Intelligence Committee.

“I always thought he should wear a red cardigan,” Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) told the New York Times in 2017. “He was the closest thing to Mister Rogers we could come up with.”

“He’s not a fierce partisan and knows the intelligence community,” Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) told the Times. “He’s very amiable and easy to work with.”

Coats was not an early Trump supporter. He initially backed Sen Marco Rubio’s (R-Fla.) bid in 2016. Yet when the Trump administration announced Coats had been chosen for the top intelligence job, the news was met with approving nods from members of both parties.

“I worked with Dan, I’ve got a lot of respect for him, he was a great Intelligence Committee member, obviously he’s got a background as well as a foreign ambassador,” Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-Va.) told The Post. “The only concern I have, and it’s not specific to Daniel Coats, but it is to all the president-elect’s nominees in this area, is that the job of speaking truth to power is intel’s top responsibility.”

But Kremlin chicanery in the 2016 presidential contest has continually shadowed Coats’s tenure as director of national intelligence. In prepared remarks at his confirmation hearing, Coats spoke clearly about Putin’s global threat.

“Russia’s assertiveness in global affairs is something I look upon with great concern, which we need to address with eyes wide open and a healthy degree of skepticism,” he said. Pressed by members of the Intelligence Committee, Coats said he supported a full investigation into Russian influence on the election.

“I think this is something that needs to be investigated and addressed,” the nominee said.

As DNI, Coats has repeatedly addressed Trump and possible collusion. In May 2017, The Post reported the president asked both Coats and Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, to publicly deny a link between Russian activities and the 2016 election. Both officials refused to comply, The Post reported. Neither Coats nor Rogers answered questions

about the exchange when quizzed by the Senate Intelligence Committee in June.

“Just because it’s published in The Washington Post doesn’t mean it’s now unclassified,” Coats told the committee.

But Coats has also strongly warned of future threats tied to Russian interference.

“There should be no doubt that Russia perceived that its past efforts as successful and views the 2018 U.S. midterm elections as a potential target for Russian midterm operations,” Coats told Congress in February.

And he reiterated the threat this week with his rebuke of Trump’s news conference comments. Speaking with Mitchell in Aspen on Thursday, Coats explained his thinking.

“I just felt at this point in time that what we had assessed and reassessed and reassessed, and carefully gone over, still stands,” he said. “And that it was important to make that stand on behalf of the intelligence community, and on behalf of the American people.”

BRIAN HOWEY: Dan Coats In The Middle Of The Trumpian Maelstrom

[Times of Northwest Indiana](#), July 22, 2018

INDIANAPOLIS – Two years ago, Hoosier U.S. Sen. Dan Coats was preparing for a well-deserved retirement. Then came Donald Trump, who swept into power just as Coats was about to let go the reins of power.

Coats’ evolution would be fitful, particularly during the pre-nomination era. He confided to NWI Times columnist Doug Ross, “I wake up every morning and the first question I ask is, ‘What did he say last night?’”

With Trump’s epic election upset, Vice President-elect Mike Pence urged Coats to join the administration as director of national intelligence. Coats had the pedigree. He landed in Berlin as ambassador to Germany just hours (literally) before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. In that capacity, Coats played a vital role in the invoking of NATO’s Article V, which brought the alliance to America’s side as it began assaulting al-Qaeda warrens in Afghanistan. It is the only time in seven decades that Article V has been invoked.

The new ambassador spoke at the Brandenburg Gate to 200,000 Germans who turned out to show solidarity with America, with a visibly moved Coats embracing a clenched-jawed German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. It was the NATO alliance at its inspirational best.

Seventeen years later came the week from Hel ... sinki. President Trump rattled European capitals and the Washington establishment by castigating NATO,

suggesting he might leave the alliance, while calling the European Union a “foe.” Trump disappeared behind closed doors with Putin for more than two hours with just two translators. Coats was back in Washington.

As Coats prepared to take the helm of U.S. intelligence, he prophetically told Doug Ross in January 2017, “Everybody underestimated, and they shouldn’t have, Vladimir Putin. He’s been two or three moves ahead of us on everything.”

A critical prelude had come three days before the Trump/Putin summit, when Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein announced 12 indictments of Russian GRU intelligence officers in Robert Mueller’s Russia collusion probe for assaulting the U.S. elections.

Coats laid out his own markers in an extraordinary address at the Hudson Institute that same day, literally saying that the “warning lights” with Russia are “blinking again.” Coats then overtly warned Putin: “If your goal is to strengthen Russia at the cost to us ... we’re not going to get anywhere. President Putin, the decision is up to you. We know you run the shop. We know you’re making the decisions. But if you want to stay in this tit-for-tat, we’re going to beat you.”

Coats explained at Hudson his daily intel briefing. “Almost without fail, the longest section of this news roundup is the section on cyber issues, which details multiple reports of cyberattacks and alerts,” Coats explained. “This issue affects all of us. Every day, foreign actors – the worst offenders being Russia, China, Iran and North Korea – are penetrating our digital infrastructure and conducting a range of cyber intrusions and attacks against targets in the United States.”

Little did Coats know that within an hour after conclusion of the Trump/Putin summit, he would be thrust into the Trumpian maelstrom. Asked by the AP’s Jon Lemire if Trump believed U.S. intelligence services or Putin when it came to the 2016 assault on the U.S. election process, Trump responded: “All I can do is ask the question. My people came to me, Dan Coats and others, they said they think it’s Russia. I have Putin, he just said it’s not Russia. I will say this, I don’t see any reason why it would be. I have great confidence in my intelligence people. But I will tell you President Putin was extremely strong in his denial.”

Trump tried to walk that back on Tuesday with his “double negative defense,” saying he meant to say, “I don’t see any reason why it wouldn’t.” On Wednesday, Trump was asked if he believed Russia was assaulting the U.S. mid-term elections and he answered, “No.”

Coats issued a terse statement independent of the White House just hours after the Trump/Putin summit, saying, “We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing,

pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security.”

After these head-spinning scenarios, the eyes of the world were on Coats. Would he resign in protest?

Former senator and Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Richard Lugar told me on Tuesday, “Dan Coats should stay right where he is. He is doing a superb job. Dan was one of the few who was prepared to help the president, to indicate precisely the dangers of cyberattacks coming from Russia or anywhere else, though he made the case with Russia.”

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, a former aide to Sen. Coats, told me, “I think his MO is to be a calm, insistent voice of reason and reality in the swirling chaos of the Trump administration. Unlike the president, Coats’ service is not about egotism; it is about patriotism.”

I’ve known Dan Coats for more than two decades. He is a true American patriot. All of us should pray that he stays on board for the next two plus years.

The columnist is publisher of Howey Politics Indiana at www.howeypolitics.com. Find him on Facebook and Twitter @hwypol.

Indiana’s Dan Coats Should Stay On The Job

[South Bend \(IN\) Tribune](#), July 22, 2018

I’ve always liked Dan Coats. And now I’ve been reminded why.

Indiana voters liked Coats enough to send him to the Senate in three elections. But he never had widespread approval. Many Democrats bashed him as a right-winger. Many Republican right-wingers criticized him as too much of a nice guy for effective eye-gouging politics. Some just brushed off Coats as “that other Dan,” successful only as a protégé of Dan Quayle, taking offices “inherited” as Quayle moved up the political ladder.

Coats always had a very conservative voting record. But he often sought to reach across the aisle for compromise.

He once told me in his final Senate term, as he was deciding not to run again, that he was disgusted with the vicious divisiveness preventing compromise for a united approach to problems from the deficit at home to the “wildfires all over the world,” security threats abroad that he saw as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Coats talked straight. Still does.

Unfortunately, President Donald Trump, in his weak and mysterious performance in kowtowing to

Vladimir Putin, brushed off straight talk from Coats, his own director of national intelligence. He suggested that Putin was more credible than Coats on whether Russia sought to interfere in our 2016 election.

"My people came to me, Dan Coats came to me and some others, they said they think it's Russia," Trump told the world. "I have President Putin; he just said it's not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be."

President Trump belatedly, half-heartedly and unbelievably added an out-of-context "not" in his statement the next day.

However, what he said in real time at the Helsinki news conference was that Putin "was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today." Would a former KGB officer lie?

Coats, likely fearing that Trump would wilt before Putin, sent a warning in a speech three days before the summit that should have bolstered Trump's resolve.

"The warning lights are blinking red again," Coats said, sounding the alarm about a cyberattack that could be likened to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Coats pinpointed Russia as the "most aggressive foreign actor, no question. And they continue their efforts to undermine our democracy."

Trump drove right through the blinking red lights to agree with Putin in their remarkable news conference that there was no Russian interference and no need to investigate what was done or might happen again.

Coats talked straight again. In a statement immediately after the pathetic performance by his boss, Coats stressed anew that the entire intelligence community agreed that Russia did indeed meddle in the U.S. presidential election.

"The role of the intelligence community is to provide the best information and fact-based assessments possible for the president and policymakers," Coats said. "We have been clear in our assessments of Russian meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy, and we will continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security."

One reaction among some who agreed with what Coats said was that he should resign. They said he would have no honor, no integrity if he stayed on in the administration after Trump threw him and the country under a Russian bus.

But another former senator from Indiana, Dick Lugar, had it right when he said Coats should "just keep his head down and do his duty," using his experience to provide leadership for an intelligence community still trying to keep America safe.

"I think it's important to the country that he stay where he is," Lugar said.

I've always liked Dan Coats. More so now than ever. And I like him right where he is. He should neither quit nor be fired.

Jack Colwell is a columnist for The Tribune. Write to him in care of The Tribune or by email at jcolwell@comcast.net.

Editorial: Dan Coats' Profile In Candor

By Lizzie Johnson

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), July 20, 2018

Should a person of principle somehow accorded a position of influence within the Trump administration resign in protest or, for the good of the country, try to get by? Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats has in recent days provided a third answer: neither.

Despite President Trump's astonishing suggestion this week that he was inclined to believe Vladimir Putin's assessment of Russia's role in the 2016 election over that of the U.S. intelligence chief he chose, Coats hasn't resigned. But he hasn't kept his head down either.

A former ambassador to Germany and Indiana senator banned from Russia for his stance on Ukraine, Coats has instead told so much of the plain truth that a White House official was quoted as saying he had "gone rogue," which in this administration is tantamount to going reasonable. Coats' strategy has the advantage of keeping an apparently responsible official in power, at least for the time being, while refusing to ratify the president's deceptions.

Coats told an audience at the conservative Hudson Institute last week that "the warning lights are blinking red" over the Russian threat to the midterm elections, adding, "Today the digital infrastructure that serves this country is literally under attack." This was so at odds with Trump's incessant whitewashing that he contradicted it the next day in an interview with CBS News' Jeff Glor, saying, "I don't know if I agree with that."

That foreshadowed the public contradiction of Coats and the nation's intelligence agencies by the president as he stood next to Putin in Helsinki, causing such a bipartisan furor that Trump preposterously tried to revise his remark the next day. One of the most powerful rebukes came from Coats, who in short order issued a statement reaffirming the Russians' "meddling in the 2016 election and their ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy" while reiterating that intelligence officials would "continue to provide unvarnished and objective intelligence in support of our national security."

Coats' candor continued in an interview Thursday with NBC News' Andrea Mitchell at the Aspen Security

Forum, where he suggested that Trump should not have met privately with Putin, said he doesn't know what the two discussed behind closed doors, and made no effort to seem aware of or pleased by the president's plan to reprise their meeting in Washington this fall.

The intelligence chief thereby provided a healthy contrast with officials such as Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, who at the same forum signed on to Trump's propaganda by pretending the Russians weren't striving to elect him. Indeed, precious few Republican members of Congress, the coequal branch designed to check the executive, have been as bold in doing so as Coats, a man who works for the president.

Employing an epithet that was, ironically, favored by another Vladimir — Lenin — Trump tweeted Thursday, "The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media." If the president's definition of the term encompasses all who dare challenge or contradict him, he has a formidable enemy within.

This commentary is from The Chronicle's editorial board. We invite you to express your views in a letter to the editor. Please submit your letter via our online form: SFChronicle.com/letters.

Dan Coats And Rod Rosenstein Speak Truth And Defy Trump

[The New Yorker](#), July 21, 2018

From public speeches to hushed private conversations, this year's Aspen Security Forum has been dominated by a single question: Why is Donald Trump so insistent on meeting with Vladimir Putin? Five days after the Trump-Putin summit in Helsinki, the annual gathering of dozens of current and former government officials, policy wonks, and journalists has been consumed by speculation about Trump's intent. Theories have ranged from the cautious to the fantastical: Trump is stubborn and still learning how government works; Trump is a longtime Russian agent.

The extent to which political polarization has infected a field that views itself as less partisan was clear during coffee-break conversations in the shadows of the Rocky Mountains. Democrats accused Trump of treason and said that he should be impeached. Mainstream Republicans wrestled with whether now was the time to publicly break with Trump. Current and former Trump Administration officials angrily defended the President. The impact of the Russian meddling was being exaggerated, the collusion allegations were false, and the cartoonish depictions of the President were unfair, they said. There was only one area, it seemed, where

consensus existed. Helsinki had raised new questions about the President's judgment, loyalty, and fears—particularly regarding Putin.

A sense of anxiety hovered over normally staid policy discussions. In one forum, a Microsoft executive disclosed that Russian military intelligence has targeted at least three candidates running for election in the U.S. this year. In another, Dan Coats, the director of National Intelligence and the country's highest-ranking intelligence officer, expressed surprise and concern about Trump's meeting with Putin. Coats, a former senator from Indiana known for his folksy, low-key manner, transfixed a standing-room-only crowd during an hour-long question-and-answer session with Andrea Mitchell of NBC News. Near the end of the forum, Mitchell informed Coats that she had some breaking news: "The White House has announced on Twitter that Vladimir Putin is coming to the White House in the fall." "Say that again," Coats replied, leaning toward Mitchell and eliciting laughter across the room. After she repeated the news, Coats took a deep breath and replied, "O.K." Coats paused, chuckled, and said, "That's going to be special," prompting more laughter from the audience.

A video of the exchange quickly went viral and sparked reports that Coats's future in the Administration might be short-lived. The exchange infuriated Trump and other White House officials, who saw it as disrespectful toward the President. Intelligence officials blamed the White House for tweeting news of a second summit while Coats was on a live panel with a journalist. "I think what's on everybody's mind is that we're gonna experience another Comey moment," an unnamed U.S. intelligence official told CNN, referring to Trump's firing of James Comey, the former F.B.I. director.

Dan Coats, the director of National Intelligence, speaking with Andrea Mitchell of NBC News at the Aspen Security Forum. Photograph by Dan Bayer / Aspen Security Forum

A lifelong Republican who is close to Vice-President Mike Pence, Coats seems to embody the struggle of serving Trump. On Monday, hours after Trump challenged the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, Coats issued a public statement defending the findings. Asked by Mitchell why he issued the statement, Coats said, "I was just doing my job." He later warned that the meddling was continuing in 2018. "It's undeniable that the Russians are taking the lead on this," he said. "Basically, they are the ones that are trying to undermine our basic values and divide us with our allies. They are the ones trying to wreak havoc over our election

process.” Coats called Russia “by far” the U.S.’s most aggressive cyberattacker.

When asked if he approved of Trump’s decision to meet alone with Putin in Helsinki, Coats replied, “I would have suggested a different way.” He added, “But that’s not my role. That’s not my job.”

Coats then openly questioned two central assumptions underlying Trump’s summitry with Putin and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un. Coats said that he doubted that Putin has enough influence to pressure Iran to withdraw its forces from Syria—a goal of Trump’s summit with Putin. And Coats said that he was skeptical that North Korea would abide by an agreement to give up its nuclear arsenal. “I’m a Reagan guy,” he said. “Trust and verify.”

Later that day, Rod Rosenstein, the Deputy Attorney General and the Justice Department’s chief protector of the special counsel, Robert Mueller, delivered a speech that differed dramatically from Coats’s comments in terms of style but was similarly pointed. Dressed in a navy-blue suit and a pink-striped tie, Rosenstein announced that the Justice Department would now alert the American public if a foreign government was attempting to undermine an election.

Unequivocal in his language and tone, Rosenstein gave a full-throated endorsement of Coats and his warnings about Russia. “As Director Coats made clear, these actions are persistent, they are pervasive, and they are meant to undermine America’s democracy on a daily basis, regardless of whether it is election time or not,” Rosenstein said. He added, “The American people have a right to know if foreign governments are targeting them with propaganda.”

Coats and Rosenstein, who has defied pressure from Trump to fire Mueller, both spoke truth. Both received standing ovations. Both are likely to lose their jobs if they keep it up.

Cal Thomas: Questioning Intelligence

By Cal Thomas

[Baltimore Sun](#), July 18, 2018

Did President Trump bungle the moment in Helsinki by casting doubt on American intelligence findings that Russian agents “meddled” in the 2016 election? His critics, including some Republicans, say so. And on Tuesday, Mr. Trump said he had misspoken when he expressed doubt about Russian culpability. But several things need to be kept in mind.

The first is that Russia and the United States have been meddling with, or spying on, each other for decades. That is hardly a secret. Second, according to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, no votes were altered, and the election outcome was not affected by

the alleged meddling. Third, the fealty most Democrats and some Republicans are showing for the credibility of U.S. intelligence today was lacking after it was discovered that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction.

Every intelligence agency in the U.S. and Britain swore (some under oath) that Saddam Hussein had WMD. It was the rationale President George W. Bush used to invade Iraq, topple Saddam and install a government more to his liking.

Some older history might serve to prove that U.S. intelligence findings are not always accurate, or worth taking at immediate face value.

On December 22, 1963, former President Harry Truman wrote an op-ed for The Washington Post. In it, Truman said that the Central Intelligence Agency, which he created, had become “an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the Government. This has led to trouble and may have compounded our difficulties in several explosive areas.”

And so, Truman wrote, “I decided to set up a special organization charged with the collection of all intelligence reports from every available source, and to have those reports reach me as President without department ‘treatment’ or interpretations. I wanted and needed the information in its ‘natural raw’ state and in as comprehensive a volume as it was practical for me to make full use of it. But the most important thing about this move was to guard against the chance of intelligence being used to influence or to lead the President into unwise decisions – and I thought it was necessary that the President do his own thinking and evaluating.”

Even then there were concerns about the accuracy and credibility of intelligence material.

In 1975, a congressional committee chaired by Sen. Frank Church, an Idaho Democrat, investigated abuses by the CIA, National Security Agency, FBI and IRS. These included allegations that the U.S. Army was spying on American civilians, and that the CIA had conducted assassination attempts against foreign leaders and covert operations to subvert foreign governments. Seymour Hersh of The New York Times wrote a lengthy story detailing attempts by U.S. intelligence agencies to collect information on the political activities of American citizens.

Democrats took the lead in reforming intelligence agencies to make them more accountable to Congress, though some critics said they went too far, damaging legitimate intelligence-gathering operations.

In 2016, the website Politico ran a story about Democrats’ tumultuous relationship with the CIA. After the Senate Intelligence Committee had launched an

investigation into the CIA's alleged use of torture, including waterboarding, of suspected terrorist captives, leading Democrats charged that the agency was dragging its feet "and perhaps even intentionally undermining the congressional probe," Politico reported. Sens. Martin Heinrich, a New Mexico Democrat, and Mark Udall, a Colorado Democrat, called for CIA director John Brennan to resign. Now, many Democrats and most of the left are applauding Mr. Brennan for calling President Trump a traitor and demanding he be impeached.

President Trump can diffuse much of the heat surrounding Russian "meddling" in the 2016 election by declassifying, as William McGurn of The Wall Street Journal suggests, "all material subpoenaed by Congress regarding Russia and collusion and possible FBI or Justice Department abuses."

President Trump might have done better in Helsinki if he had made such an announcement while standing next to Vladimir Putin. He has the constitutional authority to do it. This controversy began when a special counsel was named under the false pretense that a "dossier" paid for by the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton campaign was legitimate.

This fiasco needs to be ended by getting to the truth contained in those classified documents the Justice Department has refused to share with Congress.

Readers may email Cal Thomas at tcaeditors@tribpub.com.

When Does A Trump Aide Resign? : NPR

[NPR](#), July 22, 2018

Michel Martin speaks with The Washington Post's Ruth Marcus and Fred Hiatt about a debate playing out on their op-ed page: whether Trump staffers are enabling the president or preventing catastrophe.

MICHEL MARTIN, HOST:

Switching gears here. By now, you've probably seen that moment when the Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats found out during a live conversation with NBC's Andrea Mitchell that President Trump had invited Vladimir Putin to the White House. His reaction to the news – an awkward laugh and exasperated sigh. Coats has since put out a statement, saying his, quote, "admittedly awkward response was in no way meant to be disrespectful or criticize the actions of the president," unquote.

Still, his response has reignited a debate that has flared up over and over again, which is, should Trump administration appointees, particularly those with expertise in areas where the president has very little, stick around to keep offering their perspective? Or

should they resign and stop supporting a president who evidently does not seek or follow their advice?

Last week, even Washington Post opinion editors couldn't agree. Editorial page editor Fred Hiatt and deputy editorial page editor and columnist Ruth Marcus came out on different sides, so we asked them to come in and reprise their arguments. I started with Ruth Marcus, and I asked her why she says Dan Coats should resign.

RUTH MARCUS: Because there is no evidence that Trump is constrained in any way by advice he is getting from the supposed grown-ups in the room. The grown-ups in the room are just standing around, mouths agape, thinking, holy cow. And so by their continued presence, they are not fixing anything. They're not stopping very much that I can see. They are simply enabling Trump to do the damage.

And this is a kind of pants-on-fire moment for the country. And a spate of significant resignations might shake us, might shake Congress even out of the situation that we're in, which is to watch this fire and do nothing about it.

MARTIN: Fred Hiatt, you responded with your own column – "Please, Dan Coats. Don't Resign."

FRED HIATT: Right. Well, I start by thinking, you know, Ruth's column is just so dumb.

MARCUS: (Laughter) Fred's my boss. Everybody should understand this relationship very clearly...

HIATT: (Laughter) No. Obviously, you know, I think it's a really hard issue. I thought Ruth's column is very convincing. I disagree for a couple reasons. One is I'm sort of a pessimist, and I think as bad as Helsinki looked, I think it could've been a lot worse. But, you know, when you look at the summit, as far as we know – and, admittedly, there's a lot we don't know about what happened in the two hours they were talking without aides – Trump didn't give Crimea away, didn't sell out the European Union, didn't sell out – you know?

Until that last question and answer, it wasn't terrible. And it's possible I think given the things Trump was saying leading up to the summit about Crimea and Syria and all these other things that it could've been a lot worse if he didn't have advisers like Coats and Pompeo around him. That's the first thing.

And the other thing I would say is I think there's some value in hearing truth from people like Dan Coats at the top. And the fact that Dan Coats came out after the summit and just issued a statement and said – you know what? – yes, the Russians are hacking our system and this really is a serious problem, it's important to the country to hear that. And I'm glad we have a director of national intelligence who will still say that.

MARTIN: Ruth, so – you guys have each had your say. So let me just ask each of you a question. Ruth, why would it be in the best interest of the country for people like Dan Coats to resign?

MARCUS: It's a kind of extreme times call for extreme measures, and we are in the extremist of times, as we wrote. We are at a point where we just need a national wake-up call that this is not OK. I mean, I do think that one argument on Fred's behalf may have been demonstrated...

HIATT: Painful as it is (laughter)...

MARCUS: Painful as that is for me to acknowledge is actually what we saw Dan Coats do in Aspen. We have a new model, a kind of third way of Cabinet secretaries gone rogue, right? There are the sort of sycophantic caucus led by Vice President Pence and other Cabinet secretaries who are completely with the program. But maybe we have a kind of third way – set of cabinet secretaries and other significant government officials who will just say what they think, kind of roll their eyes and force the president – if he's willing to do it, and we have no indication that he's willing to actually do it – into firing them, if he dares.

MARTIN: Fred Hiatt, that's – the question I have to you is since there is no evidence that the president is actually listening to the people who have expertise in these areas, why should they stay there and, in a sense, give cover?

HIATT: Right. You know, I think Ruth makes a good argument there.

MARCUS: Finally.

HIATT: But I feel like, OK, Dan Coats resigns. And then what? He appoints somebody else, probably somebody worse, and life goes on. And what have we gained from that? I mean, I do see that from the point of view of the people who are in government, you know, Ruth's column was also you need to save your honor. And I completely sympathize with that. But in the case of national security, if they think they can make the world a little bit safer, there's some value there.

MARTIN: That is Fred Hiatt. He is editorial page editor and columnist at The Washington Post. Ruth Marcus is deputy editorial page editor and columnist at The Washington Post. They were both kind enough to join us here in our studios in Washington, D.C. Fred Hiatt, Ruth Marcus, thank you both so much for speaking with us.

HIATT: Thanks.

MARCUS: Thank you. It was fun.

Trump's Putin Fallout: Inside The White House's Tumultuous Week Of Walk-Backs

By Ashley Parker, Philip Rucker, Josh Dawsey And Carol D. Leonnig

[Washington Post](#), July 20, 2018

Executive time began early on Thursday, just after sunrise.

Feeling exasperated and feisty as he awoke in the White House residence, President Trump fired off his grievances on Twitter about how the media had been covering his Helsinki summit. And, refusing to be cowed, Trump gave national security adviser John Bolton an order: to schedule a second summit and officially invite Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Washington.

The two presidents had already discussed the likelihood of a follow-up meeting, but at Trump's direction Thursday morning, Bolton sprang into action to make it official, making an overture to the Kremlin. By - midafternoon the White House announced that planning was underway for a fall summit in Washington.

The bulletin landed midway through a remarkably candid interview of Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats at the Aspen Security Forum that underscored the disconnect and tension on Russia policy between Trump and his administration. The intelligence chief criticized Trump's performance during the Helsinki summit and — taking a deep breath and then offering a prolonged grimace-laugh — made clear that he had no advance knowledge of the follow-up meeting with Putin.

"That's going to be special," Coats said wryly, as the crowd in Aspen, Colo., rallied around him in sympathy for his being left in the dark.

For Trump and his White House, the days that followed the Helsinki summit amounted to an unofficial Walk Back Week — a daily scramble of corrections and clarifications from the West Wing. Each announcement, intended to blunt the global fallout from the president's Russophilic performance in Helsinki, was followed by another mishap that fueled more consternation.

Just as Trump prepared to decamp to his New Jersey golf course for the weekend and turn the page on a full week of Russia controversies, more bad news arrived Friday. Reports surfaced, first in the New York Times, that the FBI had a fall 2016 recording of Trump and his then-personal attorney, Michael Cohen, discussing payments to silence a former Playboy centerfold who alleged that she had an extramarital affair with Trump.

This portrait of a tumultuous week in the White House amid growing concerns over Trump's approach to Russia comes from interviews with a dozen administration officials and Trump confidants, many of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely recount private conversations.

The trouble started Monday in Helsinki, though the magnitude did not set in for Trump for several hours. Delighted with his own performance, he stepped offstage after his freewheeling, 46-minute news conference alongside Putin — in which he seemed to accept Putin's denial of Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election campaign over the conclusions of U.S. intelligence agencies. The president felt he had shown strength, an impression buoyed by two friendly interviews he did with Fox News Channel personalities before boarding Air Force One to return home from the Nordic capital.

But roughly an hour into the flight, Trump's mood darkened and grim reality set in as he consumed almost universally negative cable news coverage and aides began reviewing pages upon pages of printed-out statements from fellow Republicans lambasting the president. Trump called his former chief of staff, Reince Priebus, to discuss the trip and his news conference, and he also huddled with White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders in his cabin at the front of the plane to strategize.

Much of the initial scrutiny focused on Trump's taking the side of Putin over his own intelligence community, so Trump and his aides first settled on the president's sending a tweet that reiterated, "I have GREAT confidence in MY intelligence people."

But that did not silence the uproar, and aides knew they had a big problem.

Trump himself was flummoxed. He waxed on about his impressions of Putin up close — strong, smart and cunning, in Trump's assessment — and told associates that he viewed the Russian as a formidable adversary with whom he relishes interactions. He also was furious with the negative media coverage of a summit that he felt had been a clear success. And he complained to some about what he viewed as an undercovered angle of the election controversy: That the Democratic National Committee allowed its server to be hacked.

Trump further grumbled about the tough question he was asked by Jonathan Lemire, an Associated Press correspondent, wondering why that reporter had been called on rather than someone who might have asked an easier question.

Lemire asked whether Trump would denounce Russia's election interference to Putin's face, "with the whole world watching," and the president demurred. Aides tried to explain to Trump that nearly any journalist would have asked a similarly pointed question in that moment.

But, as one White House official said, "If you don't like the answer, you don't like the question."

The president still was not satisfied. Later in the week, he told CNBC, "I had some of these fools from the media saying, 'Why didn't you stand there, look him in the face, walk over to him, and start shouting at him?' I said, 'Are these people crazy? I want to make a deal.'"

On Tuesday morning, Trump told friends he did not understand what the big fuss was about. But his advisers understood. A coterie of them — including Vice President Pence, Chief of Staff John F. Kelly, counselor Kellyanne Conway, deputy chief of staff for communications Bill Shine, senior policy adviser Stephen Miller, Bolton and Sanders — met with Trump to draft a statement that he would deliver that afternoon seeking to clarify his Helsinki remarks.

Shine, new to his job, also wanted to change the narrative, and after a career as a Fox News executive, he focused on the imagery — eager for Trump to supplant the image of himself standing admiringly next to Putin with fresh content for cable news.

Trump personally reviewed first the transcript and then the video of his news conference and came up with the "double-negative" explanation that he ultimately provided — that when he said in Helsinki he saw no reason that the election hackers "would" be Russian, he had meant to say "wouldn't."

Initially, the president worried that his statement would be viewed as backing down or not toughing out the criticism — the sort of concessions he is loath to make. But senior advisers reassured him that if he had really meant to say that he didn't see why Russian wouldn't be to blame, he would be simply offering a clarification, not caving.

Clouding Trump's judgment all week has been his apparent inability to distinguish between Russian "meddling," of which there is overwhelming evidence, and Russian "collusion" with the Trump campaign, which special counsel Robert S. Mueller III is still investigating, and which the president insists did not happen.

"The biggest problem is that he believes meddling equals collusion," said Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) "Nobody else believes that. I think he's very sensitive about going there because he thinks it undercuts his legitimacy."

By midweek Wednesday, some in Trump's orbit believed he would emerge relatively unscathed.

"This president has weathered countless storms, and I think his political obituary has been written countless times and has to be rewritten," former White House press secretary Sean Spicer said. "He has broken the mold when it comes to . . . what would have been a showstopper for any other politician."

But there were showstoppers still to come. At Wednesday's Cabinet meeting focused on the economy,

as staffers were ushering reporters out of the room, ABC News's Cecilia Vega asked Trump whether he still believed the Russians were targeting the United States.

Amid the chaos, Trump looked at Vega and uttered one word: "No."

Sanders and other aides in the Cabinet Room did not consider the president's comment an answer to Vega's question. But news organizations, including The Washington Post, alerted the news that Trump had yet again undermined his intelligence officials, who have been warning about active Russian threats. And the White House had a fresh crisis on its hands.

Sanders scrambled to reach the president, who had already departed for Joint Base Andrews to greet the family of a Secret Service agent whose remains were being returned from Scotland. The agent died after suffering a stroke in Scotland while there as part of the president's support team. The press secretary delayed her afternoon briefing until after she had conferred with Trump, and relayed the president's response.

"I talked to the president," Sanders told reporters. "He wasn't answering that question. He was saying, no, he's not taking questions."

But there was another problem for the administration. Sanders was questioned about Putin's proposal that Mueller visit Moscow to interrogate Russian hacking suspects in exchange for Russians' interrogating U.S. officials, including former ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul. Trump had called Putin's proposal an "interesting idea," and Sanders did not rule it out — even though the State Department had dismissed it as "absurd."

"The president will work with his team and we'll let you know if there's an announcement on that front," said Sanders, who was careful not to declare policy from the lectern before first discussing the matter with Trump.

The episode revealed a naivete on the part of the president. White House aides fretted that Trump did not recognize the massive diplomatic and security implications of turning Americans over to an autocratic regime that jails and kills dissidents. State Department and National Security Council officials, and others, realized there would need to be another cleanup.

In a meeting Thursday morning, Trump's national security team saw that the president was mostly focused on the sending-Mueller-to-Moscow part of the proposal — and not on a quid pro quo interrogation of a former U.S. ambassador. They focused him on the full scope of Putin's suggestion, restating just why it was so problematic.

Later, after discussing the matter with Trump, Sanders issued the president's final verdict, saying he

disagreed with Putin's proposal, which she said had been "made in sincerity."

Meanwhile, in a senior staff meeting, Conway pointed out to the team that Coats would be sitting down for an interview with NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell before a gathering of thought leaders and media elite in Aspen. Conway warned her colleagues that Coats could generate headlines — and she was prescient.

The White House had little visibility into what Coats might say. The intelligence director's team had turned down at least one offer from a senior White House official to help prepare him for the long-scheduled interview, pointing out that he had known Mitchell for years and was comfortable talking with her.

Coats was extraordinarily candid in the interview, at times questioning Trump's judgment — such as the president's decision to meet with Putin for two hours without any aides present beyond interpreters — and revealing the rift between the president and the intelligence community. The spectacle was all the more surprising considering that Coats is nicknamed "Marcel Marceau," after the French mime, in national security circles because the director so rarely opines in the way he did with Mitchell.

Coats's comments were received poorly inside the West Wing, where Trump advisers saw him as playing to his elite audience in Aspen at the expense of the president. One senior White House official said, "Coats has gone rogue," and recalled another colleague's suggesting, "He may as well just have said he was DNI for Obama."

A U.S. official pushed back on the criticism, saying it is "not in Coats's DNA" to seek the spotlight and that he would never try to embarrass the president.

But the incongruous split-screen was striking. As the White House was brought low, struggling to emerge from a seemingly endless week of walk-backs from controversy, the crowd in Aspen seemed to be enjoying a high-altitude party.

When Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein gave remarks in Aspen about deterring foreign interference in U.S. politics, the sometimes target of Trump's ire was given a hero's welcome.

Several hundred people who were crammed into a roasting tent jumped to their feet when Rosenstein entered, and many stayed after his speech, hoping for a coveted souvenir: A selfie with the prosecutor overseeing the Mueller probe.

Inside Trump's Isolation After Putin Summit, Walkbacks

By Zeke Miller And Jonathan Lemire
[Associated Press](#), July 21, 2018

Facing condemnation from allies and foes alike on Capitol Hill, President Donald Trump was outnumbered even in the Oval Office. Top aides gathered to convince the president to issue a rare walk-back of the comments he'd made raising doubts about U.S. intelligence conclusions of Russian election interference as he stood alongside Vladimir Putin.

Vice President Mike Pence, National Security Adviser John Bolton and chief of staff John Kelly stood united in the West Wing on Tuesday in their contention that the commander in chief had some cleanup to do. They brought with them words of alarm from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, as well as from a host of congressional leaders and supporters of the president for whom Trump's public praise of Putin proved to be a bridge too far.

Even for Trump, a leader who has increasingly come to cast off the constraints and guidance of aides, the him-against-the-world position proved untenable. Trump may like doing things his way, eschewing advice and precedent like no president before, but he never likes being alone.

Walking off stage with Putin following their joint press conference in Helsinki, Trump was riding high after his second summit with an adversarial leader in as many months. The highly choreographed affairs had been sought out by the U.S. leader as a way to boost his credibility abroad and his favorability at home, and he believed the latest one had accomplished the task.

But as Air Force One took off into Finland's endless sunlight on Monday night, Trump's mood darkened.

He told confidants in the days that followed that he was pleased with how his summit with Putin went, believing he had taken the measure of the man and opened the door to deals down the road on a number of thorny issues.

But that was not how it was being portrayed back home.

On the long flight back to Washington, the president began dialing around to allies and aides and started to stew about negative media coverage, even from usually friendly Fox News, according to five outside allies and Republicans close to the White House not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

The reviews he received were muted — Trump rarely takes kindly to direct confrontation — but it was a taste of what awaited him on his return in Washington, where stalwart allies like Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich were speaking out.

By the time he arrived home, the parade of critical statements had become a stampede, leaving Trump the most isolated he'd been in the White House since last year's controversy over white supremacist protesters in Charlottesville. Some in the president's circle saw parallels in the response to that incident, when the president walked back his August comments critical of "both sides" for protests in the Virginia city, only to later revert to his initial position — that both white supremacists and their detractors shared blame for the violence.

Trump waited 27 hours, sent five tweets and sat for two television interviews after his initial comments in Helsinki before claiming he'd used a confusing "double negative" and meant "would" instead of "wouldn't" in a key sentence at his press conference about who was responsible for election meddling.

"The sentence should have been: I don't see any reason why I wouldn't — or why it wouldn't be Russia," the president said Tuesday before a meeting with Republican members of Congress.

The next day brought a fresh challenge. Trump appeared to answer "no" to a reporter's question asking whether Russia was still targeting the U.S. Hours later, press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders emerged to say Trump had merely tried to put a stop to the questioning by saying "no," although he continued discussing Russia after that.

And Sanders created a fresh headache for the administration when she said the White House was still reviewing a proposal from Putin to allow access by Russian law enforcement officials to Americans whom the Kremlin accuses of unspecified crimes in return for U.S. access to interrogations of Russian agents indicted for their alleged roles in interfering in the 2016 election. The State Department, by contrast, rejected the proposal — which Trump days earlier had called an "incredible offer — as "absurd."

Many in the White House did not immediately see fault in Sanders' comments that the West Wing was merely considering the Kremlin offer, but it provided fresh tinder for the bipartisan firestorm.

As each White House effort to clean up the situation failed to stem the growing bipartisan backlash, Trump's mood worsened, according to confidants. He groused about his staff for not better managing the fallout. He was angry at the two American reporters, including one from The Associated Press, who asked questions at the Helsinki news conference. And he seethed at the lack of support he believed he received from congressional Republicans.

Also a target of the president's ire was Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, who issued a rare

statement rebutting the president's Monday comments. But it was Coats' televised interview Thursday at a security conference in Aspen, Colo., that set off the president anew, as the intelligence director questioned the wisdom of the Putin meeting and said he had hoped Trump wouldn't meet alone with the Russian leader.

It all left White House staffers in a fresh state of resignation about their jobs.

"I saw the screaming headline on cable TV that there is malaise in the West Wing and I look forward to meeting her," quipped presidential adviser Kellyanne Conway. "I don't see that."

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Trump To Meet Kim Jong Un, Putin Again, Causing Rift With Intelligence

By Alex Lockie

[Business Insider](#), July 20, 2018

President Donald Trump has said he is considering more meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, despite meager results and a furious backlash from recent summits between him and the two men.

Neither his June summit with Kim nor his one-on-one meeting on Monday with Putin produced known tangible gains for the US public, something critics have pointed out.

Trump's summit this week with Putin in Finland was nearly universally panned even by Republicans after he appeared to take Russia's word over that of his own intelligence services on whether the Kremlin hacked Democratic National Committee servers to meddle in the 2016 US election.

"My people came to me ... They said they think it's Russia," Trump said Monday at a joint press conference with Putin after the two met in private. "I have President Putin. He just said it's not Russia."

"I don't see any reason why it would be," Trump added. The next day he tried to walk that comment back, saying he actually meant to say he didn't see any reason it "wouldn't" be Russia.

Similarly, Trump accepted a vague, nonbinding agreement from Kim to denuclearize, which again pinned his confidence on his personal trust in the North Korean leader.

While Trump has talked up the prospect of improved relations with North Korea and Russia — both nuclear-armed states with grudges against the US — his efforts have yet to yield major results.

As one of the few explicit promises Kim made in a joint statement with Trump after the two met in June, the North Korean leader agreed to an "immediate" repatriation of the remains of US troops killed in the Korean War.

A month later, no such repatriation has taken place, and the North Koreans have skipped meetings to set up what could be a relatively straightforward process.

Trump has continued to take Kim's word that North Korea is denuclearizing, but US intelligence services have found evidence that the country's nuclear-weapons programs have actually advanced since the talks.

North Korea, thereby, has succeeded in the same way Russia has, by pitting Trump against his own intelligence services. What's the US public getting out of this?

President Donald Trump says North Korea's nuclear threat is over. Why?

And while Trump may have succeeded in warming relations on two fronts, he is yet to produce any tangible results for Americans. Neither Putin nor Kim has agreed to take any actions in the US's security interests.

Michael McFaul, a former US ambassador to Russia, said on Twitter that "'good' relations with Russia is not a goal of U.S. foreign policy, but only a means to other ends."

What those other ends are for Trump, who did not strongly condemn any Russian behavior or suggest any major changes, remains unclear. Trump's dislike of the 'deep state' goes both ways

Trump campaigned on "draining the swamp" of anonymous bureaucrats and frequently targets what he calls a "deep state" of faceless intelligence officials acting as political operatives — and the animosity appears mutual.

After Trump's apparent siding with Putin in questions of Russian election meddling, both FBI Director Christopher Wray and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats hinted that they may resign.

Coats quickly made public his misalignment with Trump on Russia and said he'd have handled things differently. Trump reportedly then floated the idea of firing Coats.

Trump has also consistently attacked the FBI's investigation into whether his 2016 campaign colluded with Russia.

His reluctance to criticize Russia or Putin has prompted experts who formerly held top posts within the intelligence community to begin forming a consensus view that Russia has some leverage over Trump, with some rationalizing his behavior as that of a "controlled spy."

Trump Doubles Down On Russia. The Spies Shake Their Heads In Disbelief

By Julian E. Barnes, Eric Schmitt And Katie Benner

[New York Times](#), July 20, 2018

When President Trump directed aides to ask President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to the White House this fall, the invitation was his latest attempt to use personal diplomacy in the pursuit of better relations with the Kremlin.

But it was also at odds with moves by the rest of the Trump administration that served as blunt reminders that the national security establishment appears to be following a radically different Russia policy than the commander in chief.

The Pentagon declared on Friday that it would provide \$200 million in assistance to Ukraine to help fight the Russian-controlled separatists in the country's east. "Russia should suffer consequences for its aggressive, destabilizing behavior and its illegal occupation of Ukraine," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said in a statement.

And a day earlier, the director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, pledged to offer Mr. Trump a candid assessment of the vast risks of inviting Mr. Putin to the White House.

The disconnect between the policies aimed at curbing Russia and the president's position has never been wider, a gap that presents serious risks, current and former American officials said.

"If you are not clear about what the policy is, you are going to have an ineffective government," said John Sipher, a 28-year veteran of the C.I.A. who served in Moscow in the 1990s and later ran the agency's Russia program for three years. "It is worse than that. Parts of the government are working at cross-purposes to each other."

In administration strategy documents, NATO communiqués and other official orders, Russia is called a growing threat, a potential or actual adversary intent on undermining democratic institutions of the United States and its allies. The Trump administration has imposed sanctions on Russia's elite, and the special counsel has indicted about two dozen Russians on charges of interfering with the 2016 presidential election.

But in recent days, as Mr. Trump sustained his attacks on European allies, declared his meeting in Finland with Mr. Putin a success and signaled that he wanted a more constructive relationship with Moscow, following a policy of isolating Russia has grown more difficult, officials said.

"The combination of the president's repeated attacks on NATO, his repeated failure to hold Putin accountable for the 2016 assault on our elections and his refusal to call Putin out regarding the current efforts to subvert the midterms all raise legitimate questions about what is going on with the president," said David Laufman, the former chief of the Justice Department's counterintelligence and export control section.

Adding to the difficulty of deciphering American policy toward Moscow is the fact that Mr. Trump seems to have told relatively few people about what he and Mr. Putin discussed at their one-on-one meeting in Helsinki on Monday.

Mr. Coats said he did not know what went on in the summit meeting, and other national security officials said they were in the dark as well. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday that he had spoken to the president about the meeting, but Mr. Trump has not shared his thoughts widely with the government.

In other administrations, such a meeting would have produced a plethora of diplomatic cables and other documents outlining it as well as briefings for national security officials or lawmakers, according to former officials.

"At this point, all I have heard is crickets," said Eric S. Edelman, a former under secretary of defense for policy in the George W. Bush administration.

If a president does not brief his staff, intelligence agencies have few options to learn about the meeting. Their most obvious solution — eavesdropping — is off limits when it comes to the commander in chief, even during a meeting with the leader of an adversary, according to former intelligence officers.

Still, the intelligence agencies would probably try to intercept Russian discussions of what was said in the meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin, former officials said.

The disconnect between the White House and intelligence agencies could create a thorny situation if American spies collect information that might be embarrassing to Mr. Trump — such as Russian officials saying that Mr. Putin had extracted concessions from Mr. Trump during the Helsinki meeting.

"When you are stealing secrets, and those guys are talking about the Trump administration, then those guys are going to be in a tricky spot," said Daniel Hoffman, a former C.I.A. operations officer who served in Moscow.

Still, Mr. Hoffman disputed the idea that the charged atmosphere would create a morale crisis in the C.I.A. He said that even during the early years of the Iraq war, when many intelligence officers fought with the

White House over the intensity of the insurgency there, the functions of spycraft continued.

"We recruited spies. We stole secrets. We did the work," he said.

Mr. Trump has been at odds with most of the national security establishment since the beginning of his administration, with he and his allies viewing members of the intelligence agencies as part of a so-called deep state opposed to his policies.

Mr. Trump had been planning to ask Mr. Putin to the White House since their Helsinki meeting, two people familiar with the event said. But bringing Mr. Putin, a former K.G.B. chief, into the White House would pose stiff security risks, said James R. Clapper Jr., a former director of national intelligence.

"The Russians will be leaning forward to both collect intelligence, and to thwart what we do to collect against them," Mr. Clapper said. "Similarly, we will be leaning forward to collect against them, and to thwart their efforts to collect against us."

Some intelligence officials reacted with resignation to Mr. Trump's plan. While previous presidents would have consulted them about the risks of such a meeting, the officials have become increasingly convinced that Mr. Trump is not fully absorbing their briefs, even when they are tailored to his tastes with models, physical demonstrations and extensive use of photographs.

Intelligence officials are growing concerned that Mr. Trump cherry-picks their findings to reinforce decisions he has already made, several administration officials said in interviews. They noted that in the case of North Korea, he picked up on evidence last summer of growing nuclear capabilities to bolster his threats of military action; now that he is pursuing a thaw in relations with North Korea, he is ignoring similar evidence.

One senior official called it a disheartening experience.

Mr. Trump appears to have ignored his intelligence agencies in setting up the meetings with Mr. Putin, said Mary McCord, who helped run the Justice Department's national security division until she left last year.

"The president didn't benefit from the expertise of professionals who have spent their entire careers studying Russia's manner of counterintelligence, their tradecraft and Putin himself," she said.

The meeting is not a certainty. Speaking at the United Nations, Mr. Pompeo said he was "very hopeful" it would take place in the fall. But it could be problematic because it offers Mr. Putin a diplomatic victory and suggests to allies that United States-Russian relations are back to normal, said Brian McKeon, a former top Pentagon official.

For now, there is little indication that the divide between Mr. Trump and national security officials will close. Mr. Trump shows no signs that he intends to ease off his diplomatic push or curb his criticisms of the national security establishment.

At the same time, Pentagon officials have said they will continue to oppose Moscow's aggression in Europe, and the intelligence community and law enforcement agencies have vowed to continue to draw attention to continuing Russian attempts to interfere in American elections.

At a national security conference in Aspen, Colo., this week, the F.B.I. director, Christopher A. Wray, was asked about the president's attacks on the bureau. He seemed to suggest that he was not paying close attention to Mr. Trump's messaging or the chaotic atmosphere emanating from the White House.

Mr. Wray joked that he meets people who frequently say to him, "We are all praying for you." He said that prompts him to think to himself: "I haven't seen television in the last two hours. Is this all the other stuff, or did something new happen?"

Gowdy: 'Disconnect Cannot Continue' Between Trump And Intelligence Community

By Eli Watkins

[CNN](#), July 22, 2018

Washington (CNN)—South Carolina Republican Rep. Trey Gowdy on Sunday called on President Donald Trump to affirm wholeheartedly the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia attempted to influence the 2016 presidential election.

"The evidence is overwhelming," Gowdy said. "It can be proven beyond any evidentiary burden that Russia is not our friend and they tried to attack us in 2016. So the President either needs to rely on the people that he has chosen to advise him, or those advisers need to reevaluate whether or not they can serve in this administration. But the disconnect cannot continue. The evidence is overwhelming, and the President needs to say that and act like it."

Gowdy, speaking on "Fox News Sunday," said Trump missed "a really good opportunity" at his press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland, last week to distinguish the US position from Russia. At the press conference, Trump appeared to side with Putin over the US intelligence community, which has concluded that Russia was behind efforts to influence the 2016 US presidential election.

Trump versus US intelligence on Russian election interference

Trump said in Helsinki that he did not see any reason why Russia would have been responsible for the election interference, but later said he had misspoken and should have said “wouldn’t” instead of “would.”

Trump has offered varying statements on the US intelligence community conclusion, and when he said last week that he had misspoken, he also asserted, “It could be other people also.”

In the interview Sunday, Gowdy said he was glad for the follow-up from Trump, but stressed the importance of the initial comments.

“There was this equivocation during the press conference – that I’m glad he corrected it – but when you’re the leader of the free world, every syllable matters, and you really shouldn’t be having to correct it,” Gowdy said.

The White House has since announced another summit with Putin in Washington this fall, and on Sunday, Trump continued to defend the recent meeting, taking to Twitter to blame the media for criticisms of his remarks at the summit.

“I had a GREAT meeting with Putin and the Fake News used every bit of their energy to try and disparage it. So bad for our country!” Trump tweeted.

I had a GREAT meeting with Putin and the Fake News used every bit of their energy to try and disparage it. So bad for our country!— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) July 22, 2018

Trump’s Russia Ambassador Says He Won’t Resign

By Jacqueline Thomsen

[The Hill](#), July 21, 2018

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman on Saturday responded to a call to resign by saying he wouldn’t.

Huntsman’s family-owned newspaper ran a column urging him to step down after President Trump’s joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In the piece published in *The Salt Lake Tribune*, which is owned by Huntsman’s brother, Huntsman said that he would stay on the job after conducting “an unscientific survey among my colleagues” and asking his own naval officer sons if he should resign.

“The laughter told me everything I needed to know,” the ambassador and former Utah governor wrote. “It also underscores the fragile nature of this moment.”

His sons’ response, he said, was “unprintable.”

Huntsman also wrote that he has “been around politics long enough to understand the moment we face and the legitimate arguments on all sides.”

Writer Robert Gehrke had called for Huntsman to resign in a column published in the same newspaper on Tuesday, saying the ambassador works “for a pawn, not a president.”

His column ran one day after Trump sided with Putin’s denials of Russian election interference during Monday’s controversial press conference. Trump later walked back the comments.

In his column, Huntsman also cited his hundreds of colleagues who work in Russia, saying they “have neither the time nor inclination to obsess over politics, though the issues of the day are felt by all.”

“Their focus is on the work that needs to be done to stabilize the most dangerous relationship in the world, one that encompasses nuclear weapons, fighting terrorism, stopping bloodshed in Ukraine, and seeking a settlement of the seemingly intractable Syrian crisis,” Huntsman wrote. “Their dedication to service to their country is above politics, and it inspires me to the core. It is my standard.”

He noted that he responded to Gehrke’s call because “I respect you as an opinion writer and therefore feel compelled to respond.”

Ambassador Huntsman To Gehrke: Why I’m Staying

[Salt Lake \(UT\) Tribune](#), July 21, 2018

Editor’s note • In the wake of President Donald Trump’s recent summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, *Salt Lake Tribune* columnist Robert Gehrke wrote a column arguing why U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon M. Huntsman, Utah’s former governor, should resign his diplomatic post immediately. Here is the ambassador’s response. Huntsman is a brother of *Tribune* owner and Publisher Paul Huntsman.

I respect you as an opinion writer and therefore feel compelled to respond. I’ve been around politics long enough to understand the moment we face and the legitimate arguments on all sides. In fact, I regularly advocate in a hostile environment for the very values that allow us to have this conversation. In our republic, your job is key. It is to outrage, occasionally illuminate, and sometimes inspire with provocative, attention-grabbing headlines. My job is a very different one.

As America’s envoy to Russia, I am appointed by the president but confirmed by the Senate. I am charged with representing our country’s interests, which in the case of Russia are complex and often little understood. Popular punditry is ill-suited to describing the acts of courage, dedication and patriotism I regularly witness as chief of mission overseeing one of America’s most sensitive overseas outposts. Our work has been made

more difficult over the past year by the loss of hundreds of colleagues through unprecedented expulsions of diplomats and a staff drawdown imposed by the Russian government.

If you have occasion to visit us in Moscow, I will introduce you to hundreds of colleagues, who are the most highly trained in their field with years of experience working in Russia. Representatives of our foreign service, civil service, military and intelligence services have neither the time nor inclination to obsess over politics, though the issues of the day are felt by all. Their focus is on the work that needs to be done to stabilize the most dangerous relationship in the world, one that encompasses nuclear weapons, fighting terrorism, stopping bloodshed in Ukraine, and seeking a settlement of the seemingly intractable Syrian crisis. Their dedication to service to their country is above politics, and it inspires me to the core. It is my standard.

I have taken an unscientific survey among my colleagues, whom you reference, about whether I should resign. The laughter told me everything I needed to know. It also underscores the fragile nature of this moment. As for my sons, active-duty naval officers whom you also call out, I honor their courageous service each time I salute the Marine guards protecting our large embassy compound. Their words when asked if I should resign are unprintable.

United States Ambassador to Russia

The President's Advisers, Whom He Ignores, Must Guard Our National Security

By Dov S. Zakheim

[The Hill](#), July 22, 2018

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats was caught flat-footed at the Aspen Security Conference when MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell informed him that President Trump had invited his Russian counterpart to Washington.

Although an embarrassed Coats tried to laugh off the matter, the incident revealed the extent to which a tiny cadre of White House officials have kept the executive departments in the dark in matters of national security.

Leading officials in the government's national security community have been aware of this fact for some time. After all, as of last week, there had been no meeting of the cabinet-level Principals Committee (PC) — the interagency forum that includes the secretaries of State, Defense and the Treasury, the president's chief of staff and his national security adviser — since April 9, the day John Bolton began his tenure in the latter role. That is to say, President Trump saw no need to consult

his senior security officials as a group in the formal setting of that committee, either for the run-up to his summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un or for his meeting in Helsinki with Vladimir Putin.

At some point, the president no doubt will call a meeting of the PC. But his *modus operandi* is quite clear: he responds to issues trusting his own judgment and neither requests, nor is interested in, the advice of the very officials he appointed to counsel him on critical matters of national security. Given his erratic nature, and his apparent belief that he is the only genius in his government, the challenge for the people of the United States is how to survive his term of office, however long that might be.

Those who dream of impeachment are fooling themselves. Even if the House flips to the Democrats in November, even if the Senate does as well, it is highly unlikely that there will be sufficient votes to convict the president; two-thirds of the Senate are required for conviction. It is unlikely that sufficient Republicans would join a Democratic majority to remove the president from office. Conviction would be possible only if special counsel Robert Mueller (should he remain on the Russia investigation) finds a truly smoking gun that even the Republican far right would be unable to ignore.

In the meantime, it is those who serve in the executive agencies who must continue to provide for the nation's security and salvage America's dwindling influence on the world stage.

In this regard, little can be expected of a bitterly divided Congress. It is possible that it will legislate a new set of sanctions, particularly against Russian oligarchs and businesses. It might pass resolutions repudiating any or all of Trump's initiatives toward Moscow. Having proposed a variety of measures to strengthen ties between the Kremlin and Washington, most notably the creation of new business contacts, Trump will do all he can to undermine any such congressional boldness. In an election year, with a base that remains blindly supportive of anything he does, Trump will surely cow Republican legislators into inaction.

It therefore falls to those who serve in the executive branch to slow-roll anything the president seeks to accomplish. This can be done in a number of ways. To begin with, every effort should be made to keep cooperation with allies and friends, especially military cooperation, below the president's radar. Trump may consider himself a chief executive officer — and indeed that is how presidents are normally described — but he lacks patience to deal with detailed matters. And it is the daily details that sustain the workings of America's alliances and partnerships.

In addition, cabinet secretaries and military, intelligence and diplomatic officials should insist that they will respond to presidential orders only when they are transmitted in writing, on White House stationery, and signed by the president himself. They should ignore not only his tweets but phone calls from White House officials claiming to speak for the president.

Such behavior by government officials certainly would be out of the ordinary. It would smack of the “deep state” against which the president continues to rail. There is, in fact, no such deep state. But perhaps, for the foreseeable future, that is exactly what America needs.

These are extraordinary times, under an extraordinary leader, and they justify extraordinary measures by those loyal and committed civilians and military personnel who have dedicated their lives to the welfare of their nation.

Dov S. Zakheim is a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and vice chairman of the board for the Foreign Policy Research Institute. He was under secretary of Defense (comptroller) and chief financial officer for the Department of Defense from 2001 to 2004 and a deputy under secretary of Defense from 1985 to 1987.

Mr. Trump, Government Is Not A One-man Show. Trust Your Advisers And Together You'll Be A YUGE Success

By Robert Charles

[Fox News](#), July 21, 2018

President Trump, who I voted for and support, is a strong and decisive leader – a man of action. He often approaches foreign relations and meetings with leaders of other nations like a boxer – standing alone, fighting hard for the best interests the United States. The events of the past few days involving his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin show he'd be wise to start acting more like the quarterback of a great football team.

With his background as the head of a private company with a relatively small staff, President Trump is used to making deals one-one-one with other corporate executives. That worked for his business empire and made him a billionaire. But the responsibilities of the presidency are much broader, the decisions far more complex, and the number of issues any president has to deal with are enormous.

No president can possibly master the details of every issue he must deal with. That's why – like a great quarterback – he has a team surrounding him. Just as no quarterback can take the field alone and win a football game, no president can handle his job –

particularly the challenges of foreign policy and national security – by himself.

As a strong supporter of President Trump – and as someone who has served as an assistant secretary of state under Colin Powell and as a White House staffer under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush – I want to give President Trump this helpful advice: rely on your outstanding team of Cabinet members and senior advisers. This is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength.

Candidly, the president should not have met alone with Putin and only translators for about two hours at their summit in Finland on Monday. President Trump should have been accompanied by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Adviser John Bolton, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, Defense Secretary James Mattis, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman, perhaps a handful of other officials, and a note-taker.

The president was wise to select this A-Team of senior officials – probably the most talented assembled since the Reagan presidency – to advise him and execute his policies. He needs to trust them and use them. But they can't do their jobs if they're not in the room when he meets with his foreign counterparts and if they're not consulted on major decisions.

Embarrassingly, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats was surprised to learn Thursday from NBC News reporter Andrea Mitchell – during a televised interview – that President Trump had invited Putin to visit the White House. And when Coats was asked what Presidents Trump and Putin discussed in their private meeting he responded: “I don't know what happened in that meeting” – three days after the meeting was held.

The president should have consulted Coats, the senior officials mentioned above, and CIA Director Gina Haspel before extending his invitation to Putin. Similarly, he should consult with his team before making significant decisions dealing with North Korea, China, NATO nations and other nations around the globe.

Ultimately, of course, President Trump makes the final decisions – that's as it should be. But he should take advantage of the brainpower and experience of his team. That's why they're there, to support him and help him succeed on behalf of our nation.

President Trump needs to take his star players out of the locker room, put them on the field, and take advantage of their experience and talents.

Together, the president's A-Team has more than 300 years of experience in foreign policy, the military and national security positions. They are wise, honest and great patriots.

To cite just one example from my own personal experience: National Security Adviser John Bolton, with whom I worked at the State Department, is a tried-and-true thinker, drawing his advice from decades of intense study of foreign motivations, machinations, historical steps and missteps – especially dealing with the countries President Trump most needs to understand.

In addition to relying on his A-Team to attend meetings he holds with foreign leaders and to review big decision before he announces them in remarks or a tweet, the president should invite criticism internally. He needs to slow down enough to recognize that no human being can possibly know everything and be right 100 percent of the time.

The president should hear the plusses and minuses of his ideas from his senior advisers before he makes those ideas public. He should hear what they have to say about possible consequences of actions he would like to take. He should ask them tough questions and let them ask him tough questions.

International relations and national security should not be conducted like an exercise in public relations or a reality TV show. And while the president is understandably averse to endless pondering and delays in decision-making – something that plagued the Obama White House – he needs to accept that fact that sometimes snap decisions made without consulting experts can turn out to be the wrong decisions.

Here's the bottom line: President Trump is a brilliant leader, and his slogan of Make America Great Again motivates everything he does. He has been unfairly dogged by a long, drawn-out investigation led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller that is harming our nation and that has produced no evidence that he has engaged in wrongdoing.

Millions of American voted for Donald Trump because they wanted the disruptive leadership he promised, with the goal of steering our nation in a new direction, after a dismal eight years under President Obama.

But the president can't succeed – and America can't succeed – if he operates alone, ignoring and excluding the outstanding public servants he has chosen as his A-Team.

By trusting in his team President Trump can avert geopolitical landmines, unintended ambiguities and the consequences of loosely used words. He can avoid accidental missteps, mixed messages, misunderstandings and misfires. He should let his team out of the locker room and have them join him on the field and in the huddle. With his full team fielded, he will run up the score.

Robert Charles is a former assistant secretary of state for President George W. Bush, former naval intelligence officer and litigator. He served in the Reagan and Bush 41 White Houses.

Here's How Trump Should Replace Director Of National Intelligence Dan Coats If He Resigns

By Tom Rogan

[Washington Examiner](#), July 20, 2018

If Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats resigns, President Trump should nominate retired Lt. Col. Jim Reese to replace him. The idea bears consideration in the context of two Coats problems.

First, the DNI represents an intelligence community that feels let down by Trump's summit meeting performance with Russia President Vladimir Putin. As the interlocutor between the intelligence professionals and Trump, Coats may resign in protest, perhaps as early as this weekend. Second, it's now clear that Coats lacks the president's trust: on Thursday, the director had to be told by NBC News anchor Andrea Mitchell that Trump has invited Putin to a follow-up summit in Washington, D.C.

But if Coats does go, there's no obvious replacement.

After all, the replacement will need to be someone who can win Trump's trust (something as important for the intelligence community as for Trump) but also the trust of Congress. And considering the serious Russian policy related tensions between the White House and congressional Republicans and Democrats, striking the trust balance will be a challenge.

That brings me to Reese.

A former Delta Force officer who started his Delta tenure as a troop commander and then rose up to become Delta's operations officer, Reese now leads a global security and risk management company, TigerSwan, and is a Fox News contributor. But he's also a natural-born leader with the patriotism and brain power to match.

When FBI Director James Comey was fired by Trump, I wrote in favor of Reese becoming the next FBI director. And many of the qualities that I suggested made Reese suitable for the FBI's top post also match him for the DNI position. As I noted in that piece, former Delta operator Thomas Greer (now sadly passed) argued that Reese "quite possibly would have made Ulysses S. Grant appear wanting when it came to working through chaos, calming nerves, and demanding the best out of subordinates."

Greer speaks to what makes Reese most suitable for the DNI position: his approach to leadership. When I interviewed him just after Trump took office in 2017, Reese argued that leaders must be as good at listening as they are at leading. Open ears and a willingness to hear hard truths is sadly in short supply in mid-high level intelligence community leadership positions. But Reese is also relentlessly focused on entrepreneurial thinking: something that would be extremely beneficial for the disparate, overlapping, and excessively bureaucratic structure of America's 16 separate intelligence agencies.

Leading a special operations effort in Iraq, for example, Reese struck gold by fusing his intelligence and strike personnel in shared purpose. Cultivating a team effort alongside relentless, innovative tactics, Reese's team were instrumental in breaking the back of al Qaeda in Iraq. Were that mission synergy applied to the intelligence community's various directorates, it would reap dividends for the community's product: intelligence reports. Of course, that kind of leadership requires both energy and professional understanding. As a career special operations officer turned successful businessman, Reese has both qualities in abundance.

As important, Reese could win confirmation thru the Senate. A dedicated public servant who chose to serve and thrived in some of the toughest situations on Earth, Reese's patriotism is above reproach. In turn, just as Trump would like Reese for his dedication to the mission and intolerance for excuses, senators would like Reese for his loyalty to the mission first. In the intelligence world, that means the pursuit of hidden prizes of truth held by foreign governments and non-state actors.

Put simply, alongside Gina Haspel at CIA, a DNI Reese would offer the leadership to deliver more intelligence products of more intrinsic value on more important issues.

Trade Tensions Threaten Global Economic Growth, G-20 Cautions

By Patrick Gillespie, Paul Jackson And Jorgelina Do Rosario

[Bloomberg News](#), July 22, 2018

Trade tensions threaten global growth as the engines of leading economies fall out of sync, the world's top finance chiefs warned on Sunday.

Global growth remains robust and many emerging-market countries are better prepared to face crises, but risks to the world economy have increased, finance ministers and central bankers from the Group of 20 nations said in a statement published at the end of their two-day summit in Buenos Aires.

The main risks are "rising financial vulnerabilities, heightened trade and geopolitical tensions, global imbalances, inequality and structurally weak growth," the statement read. Emerging markets also face threats including market volatility and capital outflows, according to the G-20. The group's March statement didn't mention trade tensions.

Trade dominated discussions over the weekend after President Donald Trump threatened on Friday to levy tariffs on additional imports from China worth billions of dollars. While Australia and Canada said the U.S. remains committed to free and open trade,

Europeans had tougher language for the U.S. administration on trade.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire over the weekend urged the U.S. to return to reason and said the EU would not negotiate trade issues "with a gun to the head."No FX Debate

Officials said they reaffirmed their exchange rate commitments made in March, when they pledged to refrain from competitive devaluations. Prospects of an intense debate on currencies had dramatically increased on Friday when Trump accused the EU and China of manipulating their foreign exchange rates to obtain trade benefits and said a strong dollar and rising Fed interest rates were undermining U.S. competitiveness.

Mnuchin said at the weekend that Trump was not trying to intervene in the currency market and fully supported Federal Reserve independence. And the currency issue didn't come up during Saturday discussions, according to Canadian Finance Minister Bill Morneau.

Despite escalating tensions, it was important to convey a positive message during the meetings to protect investor sentiment, Australia's Treasurer Scott Morrison told Bloomberg News. He added that no country has been pursuing "protectionism for protectionism's sake."

"There are some grievances that have been around for a decade," Morrison said. "There is legitimate frustration about the failure of the system to resolve the issues that concern the U.S. and others."

G-20 Finance Ministers, Failing To Halt Trump's Trade War, Warn Of Its Global Risks

By Alan Rappeport

[New York Times](#), July 22, 2018

Negotiations to ease an escalating trade war between the United States and the rest of the world sputtered to a close with no breakthroughs on Sunday at a summit meeting of finance ministers, who warned that

the predicament over President Trump's tariffs was casting a pall over the global economy.

Two days of fitful talks at the Group of 20 gathering in the Argentine capital appeared only to raise the odds that the friction will intensify as Mr. Trump threatens more tariffs and other countries vow to retaliate. In their closing statement, or communiqué, officials at the G-20 on Sunday pointed to trade tensions as a new risk factor that could depress global growth.

"Growth has been less synchronized recently and downside risks over the short- and medium-term have increased," the communiqué said. "These include rising financial vulnerabilities, heightened trade and geopolitical tensions, global imbalances, inequality and structurally weak growth, particularly in some advanced economies."

The International Monetary Fund projected last week that the currently announced tariffs would reduce global economic output by \$430 billion, or half a percent, in 2020, if they remained in place and shook investor confidence. It argued that the United States was particularly vulnerable to a slowdown because it would bear the brunt of tariff retaliation from other countries.

"I urged once more that trade conflicts be resolved via international cooperation without resort to exceptional measures," Christine Lagarde, managing director of the fund, said on Sunday, referring to the message that she delivered to policymakers in meetings.

Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, said he disagreed with Ms. Lagarde's assessment of how the United States would fare. The Trump administration has said the tariffs have hurt certain industries in the United States but, at this point, not the broader economy.

The United States is engaged in major trade disputes on three fronts: It is attempting to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico; it is engaged in tit-for-tat tariffs with China; and it faces a fierce backlash from the European Union over recently imposed steel and aluminum tariffs and the prospect of new duties on car imports. Mr. Trump has made restructuring trade pacts and reducing America's trade deficit a central plank of his economic agenda, but his negotiating tactics have angered the country's allies.

"World trade cannot base itself on the law of the jungle, and the unilateral increase of tariffs is the law of the jungle," said Bruno Le Maire, the French finance minister. "We call on the United States to see sense, to respect the rules of multilateralism and to respect their allies."

Mr. Le Maire said Europe would not negotiate "with a gun to the head."

International summit meetings, which once showcased American leadership, have under the Trump

administration become awkward affairs in which the United States is increasingly isolated. That remained the case in Argentina, where Mr. Mnuchin traveled on behalf of the United States on a fraught mission of economic diplomacy. Although he said his conversations with other leaders were cordial, he acknowledged that talks on trade were often very "direct."

His trip came a day after Mr. Trump lashed out at the European Union and China, accusing them of manipulating their currencies to put the United States at an economic disadvantage. The suggestion had raised concern that a currency war could be on the horizon, but the joint statement reaffirmed the group's exchange rate commitments.

Olaf Scholz, the German finance minister, rejected Mr. Trump's accusation, arguing that Europe's monetary policy is "very rational" and not geared to create artificial economic success.

One of Mr. Mnuchin's goals before the meeting was to encourage the European Union, Japan and other countries to work with the United States to pressure China to change its trade practices. However, the Treasury secretary said that no progress was made on that front in multicountry meetings, and that aside from pleasantries, he had no communication with the Chinese delegation.

"Anytime they want to sit down and negotiate meaningful changes, I and our team are available," Mr. Mnuchin said at a concluding news conference on Sunday.

Europe, which is increasingly anxious that Mr. Trump will impose auto tariffs, is taking Mr. Mnuchin up on such an offer this week. European Union officials, including Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, will travel to Washington for a meeting with Mr. Trump and his economic team in hopes that car tariffs can be avoided.

The G-20 meeting also offered the United States an opportunity to jump-start talks with Canada and Mexico about renegotiating Nafta. Mr. Mnuchin and Bill Morneau, Canada's finance minister, expressed hope that such talks could gather momentum now that the Mexican election is over.

"My job is to continue to be optimistic," Mr. Morneau said, suggesting that he sensed a desire by the United States to preserve the trilateral pact.

However, Mr. Morneau added, the United States' imposition of tariffs has complicated the process. He warned that tariffs would raise prices on Americans and Canadians and that if Mr. Trump levied another round of them, Canada would have no choice but to retaliate again.

"There continues to be anxiety around trade," he said.

Besides trade, officials from the countries discussed issues such as cryptocurrencies, international tax and terrorism financing. Although drafting the communiqué has been a struggle in previous meetings, officials said this one was agreed to with relative ease despite the differences on trade and tariffs.

For his part, Mr. Mnuchin pushed back against the premise that the United States had become a pariah in international forums. Participating in more than 20 meetings with his counterparts in two days, the Treasury secretary had little down time in Buenos Aires.

"If requests for meetings is related to popularity, I'm pretty popular here," Mr. Mnuchin said.

He added, "I didn't feel isolated at all."

Trump Isolated In His Push For Tariffs On Foreign Cars

Administration officials opposed to the tariffs hope a visit by the European Commission president this week could head off a bruising trade war.

By Ben White

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

President Donald Trump's threat to slap massive tariffs on imported cars and auto parts will rocket back into the spotlight this week with a high-stakes visit to the White House from European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, who is expected to bring with him some kind of concessions from the European Union designed to make it easier on Trump to declare victory and back off.

White House officials opposed to the auto tariffs have high hopes that Juncker's visit could head off a bruising automotive trade war, which even some of Trump's top advisers think could be potentially disastrous, raising car prices and destabilizing a thriving industry on the eve of the midterm elections.

"There is not a lot of support for the auto tariffs internally," one senior administration official said. "There are many people who don't want to see it go through." This person said U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who generally supports the president's aggressive trade policy, is among those skeptical of the auto tariffs. The official, who wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the issue, declined to be identified by name.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Two other senior administration officials, who also declined to be identified by name, described a similar dynamic on the auto tariff probe being conducted by the Commerce Department, with only Trump and hawkish

senior trade adviser Peter Navarro supporting the idea of actually going through with the penalties.

Lighthizer, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow all generally oppose the auto tariff idea while holding out hope that Trump's position is just a negotiating tactic that will eventually pay off, these people said.

"On the auto issue it's pretty lopsided inside the administration against doing this," one of the two other senior administration officials close to the process said. "It's pretty much just the president and Navarro who are in favor."

Trump has repeatedly threatened to slap tariffs as high as 25 percent on all imported cars and auto parts in the next few months. The Commerce investigation could conclude within weeks with recommendations going to the president shortly after.

The auto industry, Republicans in Congress, U.S. trading partners and even some of Trump's top advisers all argue that the tariffs could be major political and economic negatives. Trump takes the opposite view, arguing that auto tariffs would be a political winner in Rust Belt states like Ohio and Michigan in the midterms.

Juncker visits the White House on Wednesday and administration officials and European diplomats all have different ideas on what he might offer. Some inside the White House are hopeful that Juncker will agree to lift E.U. tariffs on American automobiles for two or three years in return for Trump dropping the investigation into whether auto imports into the U.S. present a national security threat.

Juncker may have other demands of his own including a reduction in U.S. tariffs on European automobiles, especially a 25 percent levy on trucks.

For the moment, it remains unclear how much time Juncker — who is not technically a head of state — will get with the president. Some White House officials say the face time could be severely limited, especially since Trump tweeted angrily at the E.U. this week after it slapped a \$5 billion fine on Google for allegedly abusing its dominant position in mobile.

"I told you so! The European Union just slapped a Five Billion Dollar fine on one of our great companies, Google. They truly have taken advantage of the U.S., but not for long!," Trump tweeted on Thursday.

The first senior official who described opposition to the auto tariffs within the White House said Juncker's face time with the president will depend on what kind of offer he brings with him. "He'll get all the time he needs but only if he has something interesting to say," this person said.

Ahead of the Juncker visit, E.U. officials are preparing for the worst by assembling a list of American

exports to slap with tariffs if the U.S. goes through with the auto levies.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday expressed guarded hope for Juncker's visit.

"He will be making suggestions there about how we can enter into a discussion process to avoid this," Merkel said at her annual summer press conference. Juncker will "present possibilities for discussion" to Trump, Merkel said. But she added a note of caution. "I'm not filling myself with expectations or predictions," she said.

The Juncker visit will come after the administration endured blistering criticism of the proposed tariffs at a Commerce Department hearing last Thursday in which 44 of 45 witnesses, including representatives of major American car and auto parts manufacturers, argued against the levies, saying they would drive up car prices by thousands of dollars and cause the loss of potentially hundreds of thousands of jobs.

"By increasing the cost to manufacture a car, the tariffs will lead to higher vehicle prices for all automakers — foreign and domestic," Matt Blunt, president of the American Automotive Policy Council, which represents Ford, GM and Fiat Chrysler, said at the hearing on Thursday. "These higher costs will, in turn, lead to lower demand and lower U.S. auto sales and production. Ultimately, this will lead to fewer jobs in the auto industry."

A new study from the Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan estimated import restrictions would increase new car prices by \$455 to \$6,875 depending the approach Trump takes. Those higher prices are expected to reduce consumer demand by between 493,600 to 2 million vehicles per year, causing industry job losses ranging from 82,000 to nearly 750,000, CAR said. Those estimates do not include the impact of foreign retaliation, which could be significant.

Officials from Canada and the E.U. also threatened strong retaliation against U.S. exports if Trump goes through with the auto tariffs. "Import restrictions resulting from the present investigation could result in countermeasures on a significantly higher volume of U.S. exports, which we estimate at \$294 billion, around a fifth of total U.S. exports in 2017," European Union Ambassador David O'Sullivan said at the Commerce Department hearing.

Much of Trump's fury is directed at the EU's 9.8 percent tariff on passenger car imports, compared to the 2.5 percent duty charged by the United States. Last year, the United States exported \$52 billion worth of cars to countries such as Canada, China and Germany. But it imported \$176 billion, leading to a trade deficit in autos

of around \$124 billion. When parts and other vehicles such as buses and heavy-duty trucks are included, the entire automotive trade deficit was about \$200 billion.

Germany, the biggest European auto producer, exported \$20.5 billion worth of cars to the United States in 2017, and imported just \$6 billion from the U.S. — a difference that Europeans attribute to consumer preferences at least as much as the tariffs.

The United States and the EU were expected to eliminate tariffs on each other's autos as part of the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. However, efforts to finish the deal before the end of the Obama administration failed and there has been no work on the initiative since Trump took office in January 2017.

Meanwhile, the United States has a 25 percent tariff on light pickup trucks as result of trade dispute over chickens with the EU back in the 1960s. The duty, which has strong support from the United Automobile Workers union, has been phased out on imports from Canada and Mexico under NAFTA, but most other countries still face it.

In addition to senior officials inside the White House, Republicans and many Democrats on Capitol Hill are also highly skeptical of the proposed auto tariffs, believing they would cost U.S. jobs both from foreign automakers operating in the U.S. and domestic carmakers that rely on imported parts during the assembly process.

Senators Doug Jones (D-Ala.) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) said they would introduce legislation last week to at least temporarily block Trump from unilaterally imposing automotive tariffs. Both of their states have large auto manufacturing plants.

"These tariffs are dangerous, these tariffs are going to cost us jobs, these tariffs are going to lower our family incomes. These tariffs are going to undo much of the good that the president and this Congress have done during the last year and a half to create this booming economy," Alexander said last week.

Doug Palmer contributed to this report.

No Deal: EU Resists Trump's Zero-tariff Trade Offer, Prepares New List Of Sanctions To Add Pressure

By S.A. Miller

[Washington Times](#), July 22, 2018

President Trump offered European nations and other countries a zero-tariff deal as a way out of an escalating trade war, but so far he has no takers despite a zero-tariff agreement signed last week between the European Union and Japan.

With a battle over auto tariffs breaking out between the U.S. and Europe, Mr. Trump's proposal to eliminate all import duties and trade barriers will be on the table again when EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker sits down Wednesday at the White House.

"Not going to get ahead of the president's meeting, but this is something the president has said he would like to see," said White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

The EU so far would rather fight than deal.

In retaliation against the Trump administration's steel and aluminum tariffs, the EU imposed tariffs on \$3.25 billion of American-made staples including bourbon and motorcycles.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom, who will accompany Mr. Juncker to Washington this week, said they will bring a new list of U.S. goods targeted for sanctions if Mr. Trump doesn't back down.

"The aim of President Juncker's visit is to try to establish good relations, try to see how we can de-escalate the situation," Ms. Malmstrom told reporters in Brussels. "We don't go there to negotiate anything."

Mr. Trump gets most of the blame — both in the U.S. and abroad — for igniting the trade war in March when he slapped tariffs on steel and aluminum to bolster domestic production of those metals, which have vital military uses.

The trade fight quickly heated up with the Trump administration hitting \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods with tariffs and Beijing responding in kind. The threat of tit-for-tat tariffs with the EU is the next flashpoint.

After winning the White House with a get-tough trade agenda, Mr. Trump insists that he is doing what he promised: standing up for American workers.

The president argues that American workers and business suffered for decades because of lopsided trade deals in which the U.S. levies low tariffs while major trading partners such as the EU hammer U.S. goods with steep import duties and other trade barriers.

The EU imposes a 10 percent tariff on passenger cars, compared with the 2.5 percent U.S. duty on European autos.

A study by the CESifo Institute in Germany found unweighted average EU tariffs of 5.2 percent, compared with the U.S. rate of 3.5 percent.

"The EU is by no means the paradise for free traders that it likes to think," Gabriel Felbermayr, director of the think tank's Center for International Economics, told the German business newspaper Handelsblatt.

Sometimes the tariffs are unbalanced in the opposite direction. The U.S. has a higher, 25 percent duty on imported pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles, while the EU charges the same 10 percent tariff on most

vehicles. For commercial trucks, the U.S. levies a 25 percent tariff and the EU 22 percent.

At last month's meeting of the Group of Seven leading industrial nations, Mr. Trump floated the idea of zero tariffs to leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

"Ultimately that's what you want. You want tariff-free, no barriers, and you want no subsidies because you have some countries subsidizing industries, and that's not fair," he told them. "So you go tariff-free, you go barrier-free, you go subsidy-free. That's the way you learned at the Wharton School of Finance."

Last week, the EU and Japan signed a sweeping trade deal that will eliminate nearly all tariffs when they trade. They said it sent a clear message against protectionism — an apparent dig at Mr. Trump.

Neither the EU nor Japan has publicly entertained Mr. Trump's zero-tariff proposal.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership deal eventually would have reduced tariffs to zero for the 12 countries involved, including the U.S. and Japan. Pulling out of the deal was one of Mr. Trump's first acts as president. He said the multination agreement would have increased U.S. trade deficits and shipped American jobs overseas.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership deal between the U.S. and the EU would have cut most tariffs to zero. But negotiations were suspended indefinitely in 2016 amid opposition on both sides of the Atlantic, but with the fiercest resistance from Europeans.

Moves to rekindle the talks after Mr. Trump took office in 2017 have been overshadowed by the tariff wars.

Edward Alden, a senior fellow specializing in U.S. economic competitiveness and trade at the Council on Foreign Relations, said it was easier for the EU and Japan to strike a zero-tariff deal than to do the same with the U.S.

Beyond tariffs, the Europeans don't see eye to eye with the U.S. on environmental and agriculture issues that frustrate trade agreements.

"We bathe our chickens in a light chlorine solution, and we like hormones in our beef, and we use genetically modified crops in ways that they don't do," said Mr. Alden. "Japan doesn't raise the same set of issues because Japan is not trying to force Europeans to recognize Japanese regulatory standards. They are happy to live with the European regulatory standard."

He agreed with Mr. Trump that most trade deals — including the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement and China's membership in the World Trade Organization — backfired on the U.S. and caused jobs to be shipped

abroad and higher trade deficits. But he also questioned Mr. Trump's sincerity in proposing zero-tariff deals.

"I think what the president really wants is unilateral concessions from the Europeans. He wants to get rid of their 10 percent car tariff, for example, without the U.S. having to respond in kind," Mr. Alden said. "But the truth is I don't know. Nobody really knows."

Scoop: World Leaders Turning Trump Tricks Against Him

By Jonathan Swan, Axios

[Axios](#), July 22, 2018

World leaders are learning to play President Trump using his own set of predictable negotiating tricks. The most vivid example of this: French President Emmanuel Macron bragging to Trump that he was jamming him by stealing "The Art of the Deal" techniques, Axios has learned.

Trump, after whacking the Europeans with steel and aluminum tariffs, has been frustrated by the European Union's retribution. The Europeans have designed tariffs with the goal of inflicting as much political pain as possible on Trump. They targeted Kentucky's bourbon industry, Harley Davidson motorcycles and America's iconic Levi brand jeans.

During their tête-à-tête, Trump suggested to Macron that he tell the European Union they ought to negotiate with the U.S., according to a source familiar with the conversation.

Macron replied that no, actually he was not in favor of negotiating under threat.

"I read the Art of the Deal," the French president told Trump, with a smile. "I know that we need to retaliate first so we have some leverage in the negotiation."

Why it matters: Like many foreign leaders, Macron has learned that the only language the U.S. president understands is the un-nuanced, transactional language of dealmaking and the blunt projection of strength. It's why Trump is drawn to strongmen and belittles those he considers "weak" like Canada's Trudeau (whom Trump publicly refers to as "Justin.")

What we're hearing: A senior Trump administration official told me another story that illuminates this part of Trump's mindset. As we know, Trump was glued to the television as former FBI director James Comey testified before Congress on March 20 of 2017.

Trump would never admit this publicly, but he told people afterwards that he was impressed by the performance of his Democratic nemesis Adam Schiff. Trump hates Schiff and calls him a horrible liar. But he marveled at Schiff's tough and surgical opening statement that day.

More than six months after the hearing, Trump told an aide how impressive he considered Schiff's performance to be. "This is like September or October last year," a source who discussed the matter with Trump recalled. "Trump was like, 'I watched that [Schiff's statement] and thought I had committed a crime!'"

"He has respect for the adversaries that have the balls to take it to him like he takes it to them," the source added.

The Chinese have absorbed this lesson the best. They have engaged in a trade war with no armistice in sight. Trump has threatened the Chinese with tariffs on more than \$500 billion of Chinese imports; but, as we've reported, he's playing a dangerous game. China is fully prepared to retaliate and out-wait America.

The bottom line: President Xi is playing Trump's game with a much better political hand. The Chinese leader enjoys the advantages of authoritarianism — "president for life" as Trump admiringly calls him.

Unlike Trump, Xi doesn't have to worry about annoying obstacles like Congress and elections. And while a trade war would hurt both nations badly — as my colleagues have written — a state-run government can do more to artificially prop up its economy than a capitalistic one.

China's Coming Russian Counter-strike

By Steve Levine

[Axios](#), July 22, 2018

A big Chinese trade counter-assault may be on its way: a deliberate devaluation of the yuan, with the aim of offsetting the impact of U.S. tariffs, experts tell Axios.

If they are right, China will be mimicking an ultra-successful stratagem used by Russia to weather four years of withering western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.

What's going on: The yuan has plunged by 4.5% in value against the dollar over the last month, making Chinese goods cheaper in the U.S. and American products more expensive in China.

That's the opposite of President Trump's aim in lashing China with tariffs, which are meant to squeeze Beijing so it lowers its trade deficit with the U.S., stops forcing U.S. companies to surrender tech advances, and halts thefts of U.S. commercial secrets.

In response, Trump is accusing Beijing of currency manipulation and threatening to slap tariffs on the entirety of about \$500 billion in annual Chinese trade with the U.S.

China has not officially responded to the latest threats

As of now, the drop in the yuan's value appears to reflect a selloff by traders watching China's economy

weakening, reports the WSJ's Saumya Vaishampayan. But, with both sides digging in their heels and the prospect of a protracted trade war, a determined devaluation appears to be the strongest tool in China's toolbox, economists tell Axios.

"If they want to minimize the effect of the tariffs on their exporters, this is about the only option."

— Joseph Gagnon, a former Fed official now with the Peterson Institute for International Economics

Such a strategy would be a strong antidote, while resulting in a hit to some Chinese commercial actors, Gagnon tells Axios. "They could fully offset the macro effect of the tariffs," he said, "but there would still be a lot of micro distortions as some firms gain and others lose."

A Chinese currency play would somewhat resemble how Russia finally withstood steadily escalating sanctions slapped on it and key Russian leaders in retaliation for the country's 2014 invasion of eastern Ukraine.

After a plunge in the ruble's value and a clampdown on almost any new banking with Russia or almost any other strategic commercial deals, Russia chose what for it was a nuclear option: it floated the ruble, a step it had avoided through the Soviet and early post-Soviet period.

Russia also tightened spending, began paying off debt, and enforced a halt to the import of many agricultural and other products, thus boosting Russian industry and halting the flow of dollars out of the country.

But the main thing was that, from then on, Russia was earning dollars for its sale of oil and gas, but spending devalued rubles for salaries and other government programs at home. The economy shrunk and went into recession before recovering, but President Vladimir Putin — determined to withstand the pressure, and igniting a nationalistic anti-American propaganda campaign at the same time — retained wild public support.

In China, the to-and-fro and blood on the floor could end up looking like a similar war of attrition, even if China is less belligerent about it.

Brad Setser, a former Treasury Department official now at the Council on Foreign Relations, said a Chinese currency move would be risky at this stage because it could trigger capital flight. But should Trump escalate as he has threatened, there is a probability that "China does ultimately respond in part by letting the yuan weaken," he said.

"The problem is that the Trump administration appears to be waiting ... for China to buckle under the tariff pressure and come crawling back with a series of big unilateral concessions," Edward Alden, also at CFR,

tells Axios. "I do not believe that will happen, which unfortunately may set the stage for further escalation."

2.5 Billion Pounds Of Meat Piles Up In U.S. As Production Grows, Exports Slow

Profits, prices are threatened as record amounts of red meat and poultry fill U.S. warehouses

By Jacob Bunge

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump And Money

Monetary reform would help to avoid 'beggar thy neighbor' currency devaluations.

By The Editorial Board

[Wall Street Journal](#), July 22, 2018

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Trump's Impulsive Decrees Weigh On Pentagon

A pattern of policy pronouncements will little or no notice 'adds an extra layer of instability and stress,' says one former top defense official.

By Wesley Morgan

[Politico](#), July 22, 2018

President Donald Trump's flair for the unpredictable has taken a toll on his defense leaders, handing them orders and major policy shifts with little or no notice — ranging from his transgender ban, a military parade and a separate Space Force to his musings about reducing U.S. troop strength in Europe or intervening in Venezuela.

Last week added the specter that another capricious decree may be in the works, when the Russian military reported that President Vladimir Putin and Trump had reached a private agreement at their Helsinki summit to join forces to rebuild war-torn Syria. Such a deal would mark a major change for the U.S. troops battling the Islamic State, who are barred by law from cooperating with Russian troops fighting on behalf of the Syrian regime.

The top U.S. commander in the region, Army Gen. Joseph Votel, told reporters he has received "no such direction at this point," nor has he requested permission to do so. "I have not asked for that at this point and we'll see what direction comes down."

Previously, surprise directives from the commander in chief have demanded significant attention from top officials such as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford. And

they have almost never involved what the Pentagon considers top priorities.

Former officials also say Trump's impulsive decrees undercut the administration's effort to reverse the White House micromanaging of the military that commanders grumbled about during the Obama administration.

Before Trump, "you certainly never had a directive coming straight from the president via Twitter," said a former senior defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military officials he knows. "That adds an extra layer of instability and stress to an organization that is already under a lot of stress."

Loren Schulman, who served in the Pentagon and on the National Security Council under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, said past administrations had "a policy process where you don't spring really big changes on the Pentagon with no warning at all."

"My guess is that Mattis and Dunford have to spend a lot more time shepherding the development of answers to Trump's questions and then dealing with the press fallout," added Schulman, who's now with the Center for a New American Security.

Schulman noted that Obama also caught his top Defense Department leaders off guard in 2011, when he announced major cuts to the military budget just months after a long-scheduled Pentagon strategy review. "This was a total shock" to the defense secretary at the time, Robert Gates, whom Obama informed just a few days before giving a speech on the cuts, Schulman recalled.

But Trump has thrown out a series of curveballs to his commanders. He demanded the ban on transgender troops via an early-morning tweet, for example, and offered the Pentagon little or no notice before announcing his Space Force and canceling military exercises in South Korea.

A spokesman for Dunford, the Joint Chiefs chairman, downplayed the unusual nature of Trump's orders.

Dunford's "focus and that of the Joint Staff is on supporting their priorities in a timely and effective manner, regardless of whether it's a long-standing issue or emerging requirement," said Col. Patrick Ryder, Dunford's spokesman. "This is what the Joint Staff exists to do."

Tom Crosson, a spokesman for Mattis, said that "the secretary's priorities for the department are aligned with the administration."

Here are some of Trump's distracting directives and how the Pentagon has responded to them.

The parade

In January, Trump told top military leaders during a visit to the Pentagon to start planning a parade in the nation's capital to showcase U.S. military might.

The Pentagon has since picked Veterans Day weekend to hold the parade, which the White House budget director has told Congress is expected to cost up to \$30 million. (CNN recently reported a figure of \$12 million.) It's unclear where the money will come from, and Trump's order came too late for parade funding to be addressed in the defense budget.

Democratic lawmakers have sought to block the parade, which some say would be an unnecessary expense. One House Armed Services Committee member, Rep. Marc Veasey (D-Texas), introduced the memorably named PARADE Act — "Preventing the Allocation of Resources for Absurd Defense Expenditures."

Mattis dodged a question early this year when asked whether the parade would divert resources from other priorities. He said only that the order reflected "the president's respect, his fondness for the military." Troops in Europe

The most recent hot potato Trump has tossed to the military came last month, when he reportedly told military leaders he was surprised at how many troops the United States has based in Germany (some 35,000) and questioned whether so many were really necessary, a development first reported by The Washington Post.

The Pentagon is reviewing the size of its troop presence in Germany, but it says it is doing so only as part of routine assessments that its overseas headquarters conduct. It says it has not received any formal request from the National Security Council to draw up troop-cut plans.

The prospect of White House-mandated troop cuts in Germany has alarmed European allies. But it has also raised worries about disruptions to ongoing U.S. counterterrorism operations, especially in Africa, many of which are run out of Germany. A Venezuela war plan?

In a strange turn for a president who campaigned on the promise to "never send our finest into battle unless necessary," Trump last summer mused publicly about using U.S. troops for an entirely new mission: imposing order in the chaotic South American nation of Venezuela.

"We are all over the world and we have troops all over the world in places that are very, very far away," Trump said in public remarks in August. "We have many options for Venezuela, including possibly a military option if necessary."

A recent report from the Associated Press revealed that the day before his public remarks, Trump raised the issue with then-national security adviser Lt. Gen. H.R.

McMaster and other officials, briefly arguing when a surprised McMaster laid out a list of ways military action in Venezuela could backfire.

The next week, Pentagon spokesmen struggled to explain how the military was responding to Trump's comments, saying that "standard military planning" was ongoing. "If called upon we would have a military option for the president," a spokesman said, but no formal request had come from the White House.

A few months later, Trump shocked Latin American heads of state when he again broached the possibility.

"Rex tells me you don't want me to use the military option in Venezuela," the president told the leaders of Argentina, Panama, Brazil and Colombia, referring to his then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, according to a POLITICO report. "Is that right? Are you sure?"

Halting military exercises

Following his summit last month with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Trump promised to halt joint U.S.-South Korean military "war games," which he blasted as expensive and "provocative."

The president's pledge took the U.S. military headquarters in Korea by surprise, although a Pentagon spokesman said Trump had discussed it ahead of time with Mattis. It took another six days for the Defense Department to announce what it was doing to follow through on Trump's statement by canceling an annual exercise known as Ulchi Freedom Guardian.

Translating the president's expansive, vaguely worded promise into a manageable policy probably took significant effort inside the military, said Lindsey Ford, a former Pentagon official now at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

The lag between the president's speech and the Pentagon's announcement "says to me that there were a lot of conversations behind the scenes where people figured out how they could meet the spirit of what Trump was saying while minimizing the potential damage," she said.

Ford added that while the military likely had various options on the shelf for delaying or scaling back exercises in Korea as part of negotiations, the suddenness of Trump's declaration was unusual.

"Normally there's a front-end process where [the U.S. headquarters in Korea] develop options and send them for the policy makers to think about," she said. Instead, "they basically had to try to invent a back-end process for how you implement. That's the chaos of how this administration works."

Space Force

During a public event last month, Trump again took the Pentagon leadership by surprise when he announced he was "directing" the military to "begin the

process necessary to establish a Space Force as the sixth branch of the armed forces."

Trump then turned to Dunford and told him to "carry that assignment out."

"We got it," Dunford responded.

Trump had previously expressed interest in the idea of a Space Force of some sort. But for months, when members of the House Armed Services Committee were pushing for the establishment of a separate uniformed service focused on space, the military had been pushing back strongly — particularly the Air Force, which now has the space portfolio.

Mattis wrote to one congressman that he worried a new branch might lead to "a narrower and even parochial approach to space operations" rather than helping anything. And two military reports on possibilities for a space branch were already due to Congress at the time of Trump's pronouncement.

But a public order from the president to his top general couldn't be ignored.

"There is no question in our mind the direction he's given, so we have begun that planning effort. We're moving out smartly," Air Force chief of staff Gen. David Goldfein said of the Space Force at a news conference last week. Goldfein said Trump's attention to space had created a "huge opportunity" and a "national-level dialogue about where we're going in space," adding, "I love the fact that the president is leading that discussion."

When pressed on whether he thought a separate space service is really needed, though, Goldfein demurred. "That's part of the dialogue we're having," he said.

"I think the president's comments basically silenced the opposition from the Air Force," said Todd Harrison, director of the defense budget and aerospace projects at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Harrison predicted that Trump's order will empower factions within the Pentagon that support the creation of a space branch, but that department leadership might "continue to oppose it by dragging their feet" and trying to "wait out the clock."

The transgender ban

The Pentagon responded in a similar way when Trump tweeted last summer that he wanted all transgender individuals banned from the military "in any capacity."

After the White House followed up the tweet with formal guidance, Mattis ordered a six-month policy review headed by his top deputy and generals from each of the military branches.

The Pentagon won't say how much of those leaders' time the review took up, or how much it cost.

Critics and supporters alike have characterized Mattis' approach as slow-rolling Trump's request to overturn Pentagon policy dating back to 2016. While the reviews were underway, the existing Obama-era policies that allowed troops to be open about their transgender status — and in some cases receive government-funded sex-reassignment surgeries — remained in place.

The review ended with Mattis largely acquiescing to Trump, recommending in a memo to the president that "persons with a history or diagnosis of gender dysphoria" be "disqualified from military service except under limited circumstances."

Trump followed through in March by formally ordering a ban based on Mattis' recommendation — although that policy is now being contested in several court cases.

But the former senior defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity said the military sometimes had to move more quickly than it wanted to meet Obama's demands, too — including on the 2016 policy that the new Trump order reverses. "Often it was social issues where Obama wanted to move more quickly than the department was prepared to, like the end of 'don't ask, don't tell' and gender integration," the policy that Trump is now trying to reverse, the former official said.

Pompeo Calls Iran Religious Leaders 'Hypocritical Holy Men'

[Associated Press](#), July 22, 2018

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday called the religious leaders of Iran "hypocritical holy men" who amassed vast sums of wealth while allowing their people to suffer, part of a highly critical broadside issued as the republic approached the 40th anniversary of its Islamic revolution and the U.S. prepared to reimpose economic sanctions.

"At times it seems the world has become desensitized to the regime's authoritarianism at home and its campaigns of violence abroad, but the proud Iranian people are not staying silent about their government's many abuses," Pompeo said in prepared remarks for a speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum.

"And the United States under President Trump will not stay silent either. In light of these protests and 40 years of regime tyranny, I have a message for the people of Iran: The United States hears you. The United States supports you. The United States is with you," he said.

Pompeo castigated Iran's political, judicial and military leaders, too, accusing several by name of participating in widespread corruption. He also said the government has "heartlessly repressed its own people's human rights, dignity and fundamental freedoms."

America's top diplomat was particularly barbed in his remarks about "the Ayatollahs," saying they "are in on the act, too." He said Grand Ayatollah Makaram Shirazi has generated more than \$100 million for himself in the illicit trade of sugar; that Ayatollah Emami Kashani is worth millions after the government transferred several lucrative mines to his foundation; and that Ayatollah Khamenei has an off-the-books hedge fund, Setad, worth \$95 billion.

"The level of corruption and wealth among regime leaders shows that Iran is run by something that resembles the mafia more than a government," he said.

Pompeo's remarks were aimed in part at Iranian-Americans and Iranians living in the U.S. He assured them that the Trump administration shared their dreams for the people of Iran. He also expressed support for those Iranians who have protested their government's actions and called its response "brutal."

"The specific grievances differ. But all those voicing dissatisfaction share one thing: they have been ill-treated by a Revolutionary regime. Iranians want to be governed with dignity, accountability and consent," he said.

Pompeo said the U.S. is undertaking a diplomatic and financial pressure campaign to cut off funds, focusing on reimposing sanctions on its banking and energy sectors. President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal in May and the first sanctions to be reimposed were expected to hit on Aug 4.

"We are asking all nations who are sick and tired of the Islamic Republic's destructive behavior to join our pressure campaign. This especially goes for our allies in the Middle East and Europe, whose people have been terrorized by the violent regime's activity for decades," he said.

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